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GIVEN IN HONOR OF HIS PARENTS, THEIR SIMPLICITY  
SINCERITY AND FEARLESSNESS







*L. Falek.*

THE LIFE AND WRITINGS  
OF  
ALEXANDER VINET.

TO MY LOVED AND HONOURED FRIEND

PROFESSOR J. F. ASTIÉ,

AUTHOR OF

"L'ESPRIT DE VINET,"

"LE VINET DE LA LÉGENDE ET CELUI DE L'HISTOIRE,"

3 Dedicate

THIS LIFE OF THE TEACHER

WHOM HE HAS HELPED ME TO UNDERSTAND.

THE LIFE AND WRITINGS  
OF  
ALEXANDER VINET.

BY  
LAURA M. LANE.

"The decisive events of the world take place in the intellect."

"All great men are providential."

"Le voir, c'était déjà une lumière et un appel. L'avoir connu est une bénédiction dont on doit reconnaissance à Dieu."—E. SCHERR.

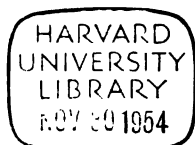


With an Introduction

BY  
THE VENERABLE F. W. FARRAR, D.D.,  
ARCHDEACON OF WESTMINSTER.

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## INTRODUCTION.



I HAVE been asked to preface the following pages by a few words of introduction. They need no introduction from me ; but I may say without hesitation that readers will here find a deeply interesting account of a sincere and brilliant thinker, who played a difficult part in a time of struggle, of which the issues still remain undecided. Alexander Vinet has many claims on our admiration. He was a critic, a man of letters, a graceful and eloquent writer, a profound theologian. In his lifetime the charm of his manner and the force of his genius won him the friendship of all among whom his lot was cast, and the power of his intellect made itself felt in circles widely separate from his own. A man who has received the homage of writers so different from each other in all their sympathies as De Wette, Victor Hugo, Châteaubriand, and Amiel, could have been no common man. But Vinet was also "a living example of spiritual Christianity," and it was this which gained him the special honour of one of the finest critics of this age, who has given him a place among his *Portraits Contemporains*. "To be of the school of Christ ;" says Sainte-Beuve, "I learnt to know, from the neighbourhood of Mons. Vinet, what is meant by those words, and the noble meaning

which they convey." Vinet was also the beloved friend of one of the most attractive and large-hearted thinkers of the last generation—Thomas Erskine of Linlathen; and he sympathized to a great extent in that "larger hope" which it was the holy passion of Erskine's life to promulgate and to defend.

The reader will be presented with a succinct but faithful view, derived chiefly from his own letters and writings, of Vinet's share in the great movements of his day in the direction of liberating the free conscience of mankind from the bondage of political tyranny. He will also watch the struggles of a courageous intellect and the misgivings of a tender conscience, in the course of its Divine awakening from a religion of forms and shibboleths to that vital Christianity which is always presented in the New Testament as deriving its source from oneness with Christ, and evincing its reality by love and good works.

The publication of this book will be a pure gain if it calls the attention of fresh students to the writings of a theologian so independent as Vinet was, yet so supreme in his allegiance to the majesty of truth. Amid the agitations of his career, he abandoned many traditional tenets which failed to stand the test of deepening experience and widening knowledge, but he held fast to those catholic verities which are among the things which cannot be shaken, and shall remain. Those ultimate truths of Christianity have found few defenders in modern days—more eloquent and more profound.

F. W. FARRAR.



## PREFATORY NOTE.

---

I OFFER the *Life and Writings of Alexander Vinet* to the English-reading public, in the belief that many will be glad to make closer acquaintance with the Swiss Professor to whom some of Thomas Erskine's<sup>1</sup> most interesting letters were addressed.

"I made a new acquaintance at Lausanne," wrote Erskine, September 14, 1838, "with M. Vinet, the most remarkable man in the French Protestant Church. . . . He has that basis of thought in him on which thoughts from all quarters can find a footing or a rooting. . . . There are few men like him in the world. Such a combination of mental power and Christian character is the rarest of all things."

Nor was Mr. Erskine the only inhabitant of Great Britain who appreciated Vinet's intellectual and moral gifts. In the *Reminiscences* of A. P. Stanley, Dean of Westminster, we read,—

"Vinet was constantly going forward: he had a fine power of writing. Yet he says himself he could count those who fully sympathized with him upon 'the ten fingers of his two hands.'"

<sup>1</sup> T. Erskine of Linlathen.

In the *Life and Letters of Frederic Denison Maurice* we find the following allusion to Vinet:—

“In Bunsen’s account, the political condition of Switzerland is sufficiently sad. In Lausanne, Vinet and the most intelligent of the Swiss are taking up a kind of non-juring doctrine, which they are maintaining with great ability. . . . There is a book which I doubt not you know well, *Sur la manifestation des convictions religieuses*, by Alexander Vinet. I differ from its anti-State doctrines as much as any one can differ. Nevertheless there is more in that book than its great eloquence and earnestness, which moved me when I read it, and which moves me now.”<sup>1</sup>

Lord Acton, in his article on George Eliot,<sup>2</sup> deploras the loss that gifted writer sustained by persistently ignoring the phases of religious thought which gather round the names of Rothe and Vinet.<sup>3</sup>

“The literature of ethics and psychology, so far as it touched religion, dropped out of her sight, and she renounced intercourse with half the talent in the world. The most eminent of the men who pursued like problems in her lifetime, among the most eminent who have thought about them at any time, were Vinet and Rothe. Both were admirable in their lives, and still more in the presence of death; and neither of them could be taxed with thralldom to the formulas of preceding divines. . . . Yet, although she knew and highly valued M. Scherer, she did not remember that he was the friend of Vinet, and that the

<sup>1</sup> To Dean Stanley.

<sup>2</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, vol. xvii. p. 179, March 1885.

<sup>3</sup> This testimony is particularly valuable from a member of the Roman Catholic communion.

history of his opinions is as remarkable as anything to be found in the *Apologia* or in her own biography."

To how many others might not the same reproach be addressed. Outside the little world of those who watch with keen interest the struggle between the old and the new theology, the name of Vinet is unknown.

Yet there has always existed in the French-speaking Churches an *élite* who feel for Vinet much of the enthusiasm that the Germans display with regard to Schleiermacher. All theological parties claim him for their own. For the one he is too liberal, for the other he is too orthodox; but neither will relegate him to the opposite camp. Even those who sympathize the least with his views cannot refrain from rendering homage to the beauty and depth of his writings. All share the opinion of Pierson<sup>1</sup> the Dutch critic:—

"Where Vinet is concerned, everything that resembles superficiality is almost sacrilege."

"Vinet's *coup d'œil*," writes Edmond de Pressensé, "has not the power of Pascal; but his horizon is vaster, and his mind is freer."

But it is not exclusively as a theologian that I wish to introduce Vinet to English readers. He was a many-sided man, a thinker, a moralist, a critic—I might almost say a statesman. Men so widely divergent as Sainte-Beuve, Emile Souvestre, Victor Hugo, Michelet, St. René Taillandier, Lamartine, Ravaisson,<sup>2</sup> Henri Amiel, and

<sup>1</sup> Professor of Literature, University of Amsterdam.

<sup>2</sup> Author of the *Essay on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*. —

Edmond Scherer unite in paying homage to Vinet's "inexhaustible abundance of ideas, originality of expression, literary taste, Christian feeling, and universal sympathy."

The following pages will trace the history of Vinet's magnificent struggle on behalf of religious liberty both within and without the Church: on the one hand, by freeing it from the tyranny of a despotic and brutal majority; and, on the other, by presenting a conception of Christianity which was destined to effect an intellectual revolution whose influence is still spreading in ever-widening circles throughout the world of thought.

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- Vinet comme Apologiste. Widmer.
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## ALEXANDER VINET.

Mémoire en faveur de la liberté des cultes.  
Essai sur la Conscience.  
Discours sur quelques sujets religieux.  
Nouveaux Discours.  
Études Évangéliques.  
L'Éducation, la Famille, et la Société.  
Mélanges : Philosophie. Études Littéraires.  
Essai sur la Manifestation des convictions religieuses.  
Études sur Blaise Pascal.  
Moralistes des 16<sup>e</sup> et 17<sup>e</sup> Siècles.  
Poètes du Siècle de Louis XIV.  
Histoire de la Littérature Française, 18<sup>e</sup> 19<sup>e</sup> Siècles.  
Chrestomathie Française.

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Those who are acquainted with that masterpiece of biography,—“A. Vinet, Histoire de sa vie et de ses ouvrages,” by Eugène Rambert,—will easily recognise the source whence most of the incidents related in the following pages are drawn.

# LIFE OF ALEXANDER VINET.

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## INTRODUCTION.

THE Canton of Vaud, which encircles the shores of Lake Lemman, may be regarded as an epitome of Switzerland. Holding a mid-position between the south, to which it owes its first civilisation, and the north, which has called it to independence, it reproduces on a limited scale the characteristic features of the country,—the undulating plain bounded by lakes, the peaks and turrets of the snow-clad Alps, and the waving outline of the Jura.

Romans, Burgundians, and Savoyards have successively striven for the possession of the "good country of Vaud," which fell at last into the hands of the powerful Republic of Berne in the year 1536. Not content with territorial sway, the conquerors sought to dominate the minds and consciences of the conquered race, and the new religion (*i.e.* the Reformed faith) was imposed by the sword. Under the rule of "their Excellencies of Berne" the Vaudois Church became the mere creature of the Government. Nor was its position improved by the Revolution of 1798, which delivered Vaud from the Bernese yoke to incorporate it in "the one and undivided Helvetic Republic." A system of centralization, hitherto

unknown, characterized the new Government, and the Representative Assembly exercised an authority as despotic as that which had formerly been assumed by Berne.

After the fall of the Republic in 1803 the Vaudois Church became "Cantonal;" but this was only the exchange of one form of tyranny for another. The clergy submitted themselves to the civil authorities with a servile humility which at once provokes our indignation and our amazement.<sup>1</sup> It was the State, not the Church, which exercised ecclesiastical discipline,—imposing on those who wished to be joined together in holy matrimony the obligation of possessing a "Bible certificate" as well as a musket, and inflicting penalties on those persons who did not approach the Lord's table at stated times.

This condition of subordination to the State was a rooted obstacle to all free development, and it betokened, moreover, that the need of liberty was not felt. There was no force of resistance, because there was no free healthy life. The sojourn of Voltaire in Lausanne (where he saw "Zaire" performed, "better than in Paris," before two hundred spectators, "as good judges as can be found in Europe"), and the presence of Rousseau in an adjacent canton, exercised a parching influence upon the minds of the Vaudois clergy. The sermons of the time are redolent of the perfume of the eighteenth century. The words "virtue" and "sensitivity" are to be read on every page.

The students led disorderly and scandalous lives, and if a pastor were seen leaving his home with staggering footsteps, the members of his flock would only remark with a smile that the shepherd of their souls had been *seeing his friends!*

<sup>1</sup> Cart.

Turning to Geneva, we find matters there at a still lower ebb. In the famous article of the *Encyclopédie* devoted to that city, d'Alembert affirmed that many Genevese pastors no longer believed in the divinity of Jesus Christ, and that their religion was only a form of Socinianism.

Voltaire did not hesitate to call the successors of Calvin "shamefaced Socinians." Rousseau reproached them for their want of candour. "They are singular people, your ministers; one can neither make out what they believe nor what they don't believe, nor even what they pretend to believe."

Yet even in that dark period some glimmerings of light are discernible against a background of worldliness and indifference.

In 1741, Count Zinzendorf had established a branch of his community of Moravian Brethren in Geneva.<sup>1</sup>

It spread rapidly, and soon numbered several hundred members. Some theological students who were in communication with the Moravians began to thirst for something better than the teaching of their Church, in which the landmarks of Christianity had been well-nigh swept away by a strong current of Rationalism.

Accordingly they formed a society under the direction of the Precentor Bost, a member of the Moravian Society. The motive which inspired them was briefly stated to be that of "encouraging ourselves to persist and to grow in the love of God and in purity of life."

From the first these meetings excited the displeasure

<sup>1</sup> Close by the meeting-place of the Moravians was a lodge of Freemasons. Its members held firmly to the dogma of the Trinity, and their ideas and religious habits were coloured by an extreme form of mysticism. They were in close communication with a small sect of theosophists then existing in Lausanne, who, in addition to the works of Madame Guyon, studied the writings of Jung Stilling and of Jacob Boehme.

of the "Venerable Company" (Consistory of Geneva). It was in vain that Bost urged the pastors to come to the assemblies in order to convince themselves that they were free of any sectarian aim.

The few who ventured to respond to his appeal were so alarmed by the doctrines they heard professed respecting the divinity of Christ and justification by faith that they refused to return. Furthermore, the young men who frequented the meetings were warned that unless they broke off their connection with the society they could not be admitted to the ministry.

Matters were at this point when the famous Baronne de Krudener arrived in Geneva, July 1813. She was brought thither by a so-called prophecy of Madame de Guyon, which led her to expect great results from this visit. This remarkable woman, after an adventurous life, had passed from the extreme of worldliness to the extreme of devotion. She brought to the service of God the same feverish activity, the same excitability which had distinguished her in society. Stilling introduced her to mysticism, and the prophetess Kummerin opened to her the world of visions. She preached from morning to night, and, not content with this, she sought to enter into communication with the invisible world. While forced to admit that the wish to play a leading part, which had been always one of her marked characteristics, became one of the motive powers of her religious activity, it is certainly no less true that the fire of her enthusiasm kindled in many hearts a sincere love of God.

Madame de Krudener lost no time in entering into relations with the "Society." One of the theological students named Empeytaz, strongly attracted by her love of souls, determined to cast in his lot with hers. When Madame de Krudener left Geneva, Empeytaz accompanied



her, and spent some years aiding her in her missionary work.<sup>1</sup> Later, the Baronne's fanatical indiscretion obliged the civil authorities to adopt rigorous measures which separated her from her followers, and, among others, from Empeytaz.

Meantime, the religious movement of which Geneva was the theatre had been quickened by the arrival of certain strangers, and notably of Robert Haldane, a Scotch gentleman, who, after devoting twenty years of his life to the evangelization of his own country, undertook a missionary journey to the Continent.

"After the lapse of many years," writes F. Monod, "I can picture this handsome, dignified man surrounded by students, his Bible in hand, losing no time in argument, but pointing with his finger to the Bible and saying: 'Look, this is written with the finger of God.'"

Many of the candidates for the ministry — Merle d'Aubigné, Gaussen, Frédéric Monod, Pyt, and César Malan — dated from his teaching the beginning of a new life.

Malan has been named "the Cæsar of the Revival." His exaggerated Calvinism and his manner of presenting the doctrine of assurance distinguished him from the rest. It may be said of Malan that he made ultimate salvation depend on the cogency of a syllogism. "God has said in His word: 'Whosoever believeth in the Son hath life.'"

"I believe!

"Therefore, I have life!"

A contemporary wrote of him,—

"Malan can only live in extremes. He takes three or four dogmas, deduces from them logical consequences,

<sup>1</sup> It was on the occasion of their visit to Paris that took place Madame de Krudener's celebrated conversation with the Emperor of Russia, which gave birth to the formation of the Holy Alliance.

which the orthodox refrain from putting into words, and then damns every one who diverges from them one iota."

It was a sermon from César Malan on the subject of salvation by grace, together with a pamphlet from Empeytaz, entitled *Considerations on the Divinity of Jesus Christ*, which aroused into activity the long slumbering displeasure of the Geneva Consistory. The regulation of 3rd May 1817 was the result. By it the pastors were ordered to sign a promise to abstain from speaking on controverted subjects, such as the Divinity of Christ, Original Sin, and Divine Grace.

The immediate consequence of this enactment was precisely the opposite to that which it had been intended to produce. Instead of consolidating the Church, it introduced schism.

Haldane had left Geneva, begging his friends to take no hasty, ill-considered action. He was replaced by Henry Drummond, a man of an altogether different turn of mind, who possessed neither the depth nor the calm good sense of Haldane. While the latter had contented himself with expounding the doctrines of Christianity and edifying the souls of individuals, Drummond excited his youthful followers to found a sect. On the 21st September 1818 the New Church inaugurated its existence by the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and Empeytaz, who had just separated from Madame de Krudener, was the first preacher.

Popular indignation was aroused by these innovations. The building where the meetings of the "New Church" were held was attacked by an angry crowd, and cries of "Down with the Moravians! To the Lantern! Down with Jesus Christ!" resounded on the air. The Government did its best to protect the worshippers, and two com-

panies of militia were called out. In their ranks was found a new Saul, one Sergeant Félix Neff, who, outraged by the blasphemous conduct of the populace, was led a few weeks later to cast in his lot with the persecuted Church.

The origin of the nickname *Momiers*, i.e. Mummers, which will frequently occur in the course of these pages, is to be found in a number of the *Feuille d'Avis*, bearing the date 7th October 1818:—

“Next Sunday at Fernay the troupe of Mummers, under the direction of the President, will continue its fantastic performance. The clown will amuse the audience,” etc.

This ignoble joke sufficed to introduce the word into the language of the period.

The influence of Haldane had tinged with Calvinism the doctrines of the New Church. The Church and the world were to be separate in custom as well as in principle. Games, worldly pleasures, luxury in dress, curling of the hair, were absolutely forbidden, and the “Patois of Canaan” became the habitual language of Christians.

Ami Bost, a man of great breadth of view as well as largeness of heart, separated himself from the New Church on account of its narrowness and bigotry, and founded another at Carrouge. He deplored the spirit of harsh criticism which had invaded the kingdom of God—complaining that “*all religious books which one has not written oneself are condemned, and that all preachers who do not adopt one's own particular point of view are accused of heresy.*” It is probably due to the fact that the Church in Geneva had wandered so far from orthodoxy, that the Revival there assumed so rigid and dogmatic a character.

Men such as Malan, Empeytaz, Pyt, and Neff recoiled in horror from the barren, lifeless teaching of the "Venerable Company," and raised their voices to arouse sinners from the sleep of indifference.

The sphere of their activity was not limited to Geneva. They looked abroad to the other Swiss cantons, and evangelists were sent in all directions to win souls to God.

Speaking of these early workers of the Revival, Guisan has declared that "the salvation of souls was their only passion and aim."

While cordially endorsing this statement, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that this noble passion was marred by narrow views, by spiritual pride, by censorious and unjust judgment. "The presentation of dogma in its most absolute form was the natural result of a reaction against the withered and lifeless Rationalism of the past. A rigid orthodoxy, which confounded Christianity itself with the scholastic theology borrowed from England, characterized the modern view. While recognising, under this narrow form, the existence of a warm, living faith, we are compelled to acknowledge that the leaders of the Revival made no distinction between religion and theology, and that they appeared to imagine that their interpretations of divine truth had fallen from heaven with the inspired text." <sup>1</sup>

They were thus led to make of Christianity a doctrine, a book, a theory, rather than a life, and to depend on an external authority, which after all was purely human, for the interpretation of the letter of Scripture.

It was impossible for the Canton of Vaud to remain uninfluenced by a movement which was stirring most of the Protestant Churches of France, Switzerland, and Holland to their depths. Unlike Geneva, the Church of

<sup>1</sup> E. de Pressensé.

Vaud had never lapsed from orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup> Pastors and people gave their assent to the doctrines of the Helvetic Confession, but the churches were empty, the preachers lacked life, and worldliness and frivolity had invaded all classes of society.

The Catechism of Ostervald and translations from the sermons of Blair and Tillotson satisfied the religious aspirations of most professing Christians. In a sermon on the Prodigal Son, preached by Professor Durand, we find the expression, "We seek to exhibit the religion of Christ as a *supplement to human weakness*." The course of religious instruction published by the Doyen Réal contains a strong flavour of eighteenth century philosophy; witness such phrases as "our relations with the *Great Being*," and "Religion merits the attention of every man of *sensibility*." It was in vain that the law was preached in all its rigour. Morality separated from its basis soon lapsed into utilitarianism.

"I cannot recall without pain," writes a former candidate for the ministry, "the sad years of our university life. Our evenings were spent in clubs and in cafés, our theological societies were mere excuses for splendid suppers. Our professors never spoke to us of vital godliness. Never shall I forget the day of our ordination. The preacher chose for his theme some point of ecclesiastical history; and we took the oath to teach according to the doctrines of the Helvetic Confession, about which we knew absolutely nothing."

It is incontestable that English Methodism, passing by way of Geneva, played an important part in the history of the religious movement of the Canton of Vaud. But

<sup>1</sup> The Church of Geneva had wandered so far from the Helvetic Confession, that after the publication of an anti-reform pamphlet from the pen of Professor Chenevière, the Church of Lausanne felt bound to break off all communion with that of Geneva.

revival of religion, to be real and profound, must be in conformity with the genius of the people. In the Canton of Vaud the movement owes its origin to the teaching of the Doyen Curtat.

The personal appearance of this remarkable man was insignificant. He was short of stature, and his figure was bent. His voice was thin and weak. When he wished to impress some truth upon his audience, he was in the habit of dropping instead of raising his voice, and in the hush of eager expectancy that ensued a pin might be heard to drop. Reacting against the tendency of the age, the Doyen insisted on the fallen condition of man, the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the inspiration of Scripture; but, as has been truly observed, "Curtat preached the old rather than the new man, and the call of the Holy Spirit rather than His constant action in the souls of Christians."

"Gentlemen, read Calvin," he was fond of saying to his theological candidates; but when the young men followed his advice, they found in Calvin many things that Curtat did not teach. When they came to preach in their turn, he complained that they "went too far, and fell into exaggeration." According to the saying of one of his disciples, the worthy Doyen "put his hand on the latch; others opened the door and entered in."

"Regarded from the historical point of view," says M. Bouvier, "the Revival was a reaction from the influences of the eighteenth century, and a passionate return towards the principles of the sixteenth. To the two objects of worship of the former century, *i.e.* reason and virtue (which had been discredited by the horrors of the Revolution), the Revival put in opposition the dogmas of the fall, of the sovereignty of divine grace, of salvation by supernatural means, and of the infallible authority of Holy Scripture. Looking deeper, we cannot fail to see in the religious Revival one of the signs of effort towards the transforma-

tion of the political, literary, and religious ideal whence was to emerge the nineteenth century thirsting for emotion, for belief, for food for the conscience, and for the imagination which had been crushed by the imperious sway of reason."

It remains for us now to consider the influence upon modern thought of a man whose life and activities are so closely bound up with the progress of the Revival that the one cannot be studied independently of the other. This was Alexander Vinet, the "Pascal of Protestantism."





**PART FIRST.**

**1797-1823.**



## CHAPTER I.

*Childhood and Youth—Betrothal.*<sup>1</sup>

LAUSANNE, which from the height of its three hills dominates Lake Leman, has for its port the little hamlet of Ouchy. Close to the shore rises a square grey tower, which was formerly used as a Custom-house. Here Alexander Rodolphe Vinet was born, 17th June 1797.

The family, which was of French origin, had resided in Switzerland during two generations.

Alexander's father, who began life as a village school-master, belonged to that vigorous generation which the Canton of Vaud, on her deliverance from the yoke of Berne, was fortunate in finding ready to support the burden of a suddenly improvised administration. While fulfilling the duties of Secretary to the Home Department he occupied himself with the education of his family, bringing up his children in the austere traditions which had formed the background of his own youth. Duty and submission were the watchwords of the household. Pleasure and frivolity were unknown. Even when Alexander was a tall schoolboy, he was obliged to wear the clumsy garments made by a village tailor, while his father undertook the office of barber, shaving his child's hair so close that his appearance excited the ridicule of his comrades. Society was avoided as much from principle as from economy. Yet this sternly disciplined family—which reminds one of a Puritan household in New Eng-

<sup>1</sup> Rambert. Astié.

land—was not a sad one. The vivacity of Southern blood tempered Marc Vinet's Huguenot severity. At table he had always some entertaining story to relate. In the evening he read aloud to his family, and poetry was not numbered among the vanities which had to be severely banished from the domestic hearth.

Marc Vinet loved his children tenderly ; but, following the example of his ancestors, he had learned to regard life as a conflict, and to repress sternly all enervating influences. Although Madame Vinet was "kindness itself—made up of devotion and sacrifice," it is impossible to deny that the domestic discipline was too severe for Alexander. To his dying day he never succeeded in overcoming a timidity that he bitterly deplored. As a child he trembled when he heard his father's step on the staircase—"I will not cry, mamma, I will not cry," he used to say ; but in spite of his resolution the tears would force their way. This extreme sensibility astonished and irritated the father. "I expect a great deal from Henry" (an elder brother), he would say, "but little from Alexander."

The consciousness that he occupied a low place in his father's esteem increased his timidity, and made him more sensitive than ever to reproof.

At the age of seven, Alexander entered the cantonal school.

He was fond of reading, and had soon exhausted the home library, which consisted of the works of La Bruyère, Voltaire's *Siècle de Louis XIV.*, the works of Berquin, the *Discovery of America*, by Campe ; Madame de Genlis' Plays, and *Robinson Crusoe*, which remained Alexander's favourite volume to the end.

When the time came for entering the Academy, Marc Vinet began to realize that a little more liberty must be given to his son. Accordingly, Alexander was permitted

to take his part in the pursuits and amusements of his fellow-students.

In November 1812 he became a member of the so-called "Society of Philosophy." Papers were read and discussed. Every now and then a favourite professor took a friendly part in the proceedings. "One day when Alexander, napkin on arm, was serving as butler at an impromptu repast, he suddenly perceived the grave figure of his father standing in the doorway. To his dying day his son never forgot the emotion caused by this unexpected apparition."

The young student soon gave evidence of considerable literary ability. Verses began to flow from his pen. His father criticized these juvenile productions without mercy; but he told himself that after all there was good stuff in this son, whose abilities he had formerly held in scant esteem.

Vinet's comrades were quick to recognise his talents. He undertook the direction of a troupe of amateurs who acted Society plays with great spirit. He wrote songs for fête-days, and was always ready to turn the exploits of his fellow-students into verse. He was full of fun and of mischief, but in later days he never had occasion to blush for the deeds of his youth.

"The most important of his boyish adventures concerned the deliverance of a 'persecuted fair one.' It was rumoured that a young girl—the victim of a cruel step-mother—was held prisoner in a solitary country house situated in the outskirts of Lausanne. Cries and moans were heard at night, and it was feared that the victim's reason would succumb to this harsh treatment. Vinet and some of his friends pledged themselves to release her. One night at 11 P.M. they approached the suspected house. A light was seen to pass from window to window; then it disappeared, and was seen shortly

afterwards in another part of the building, absolutely separate from the first. This caused the young Don Quixotes to imagine that the prisoner might be approached by a subterranean way, and their ardour was redoubled. One of the party attempted to scale a tree which grew beneath the window of the chamber wherein languished the Dulcinea. Unfortunately a noise betrayed their presence. The master of the house appeared, armed with a gun, and fired straight at the band of rescuers, who were obliged to beat a retreat, carrying their wounded with them. Vinet himself was honoured with the reception of a few grains of lead.

"In the course of the legal proceedings which were the result of this escapade, it transpired that the prisoner was now more kindly treated. Vinet 'was transported with joy' on learning that his chivalrous enterprise had borne good fruit."

A year later, Vinet received an official reprimand for having wounded by means of a patriotic song the susceptibilities of the Bernese, who were trying to regain possession of the Canton. Vinet had embodied the general excitement in a kind of "Marseillaise," entitled "Le Réveil des Vaudois."

Professor Durand, a pleasant, kindly old man of French origin, who lectured on Ethics, contributed more than any one else to form the young student's taste, and to inspire him with admiration for the true models of literary style. The kindness, the generosity of mind, and the natural elevation of sentiment, which none could fail to recognise, endeared the professor to all who knew him. He kept open house, and one of his most constant visitors was Vinet. Later we find the young student giving lessons to Mademoiselle Durand (the professor's grandchild), a charming girl, full of intelligence and vivacity; "and there can be little doubt but that there

would have resulted a second edition of the story of Abélard and Héloïse, if Fate had not brought about a separation."<sup>1</sup>

The personal appearance of the teacher was not calculated to charm the fancy of a young girl. His bearing was ungraceful, his limbs were bony and heavy, his features thick and strongly marked. Yet we learn that Madame de Montolieu (author of the *Châteaux Suisses*) inquired who that ugly young man was "who became handsome when he spoke"? It sufficed to see him smile, to hear his voice, to be surprised by his glance, to divine a sensibility which was almost feminine in its charm.

Professor Durand died in 1816. As the coffin which contained his mortal remains was lowered into the grave in the presence of a crowd of sympathizing spectators, Vinet advanced and pronounced a farewell discourse. This was done naturally, without premeditation; but funeral orations had been forbidden on account of former abuses, and many were shocked by this innovation. Vinet received an official rebuke of a more severe character than that which he had incurred on account of his patriotic song.

By the desire of friends the discourse was printed. Its stilted language may provoke a smile from those who have not learned that simplicity of expression is the crowning triumph of art.

"If we murmur at the fate of a being cut off from hope and happiness in the morning of life, we accord still more regret to the aged man who consecrated all the moments of his long life to the practice of virtue." Nevertheless, those who listened were impressed. "My fellow-disciples wept bitterly," wrote Vinet to his cousin, Mademoiselle Sophie de la Rottaz, to whom he had become engaged with the full approbation of his parents.

<sup>1</sup> Astié.



The character of this lady can best be described by a quotation from one of Vinet's letters written in the early days of the engagement.

"Your letters are—*yourself*, your language, your bearing, your looks, all that you do, is yourself. You allow others to read the clear depths of your mind. Art, which can imitate everything else, can never imitate this perfect truthfulness of soul."

In obedience to his father's wish, but without any marked sense of a vocation, Vinet prepared himself for the ministry. His piety had not the depth and spirituality which it was subsequently to acquire. Later, Vinet deplored the fact that he had presented himself for ordination thoughtlessly. In his poetry we sometimes catch the accents of the eighteenth century, which he had learned from Professor Durand. Yet—

"from the first," writes his friend, Isaac Secrétan, "I saw in him an innate love of truth, uprightness, candour, and directness. While yet a boy he was shocked to see the oath taken by certain members of the council who were notorious unbelievers. He was always in dread lest speech should outrun sincere conviction."

The study of theology was pursued at this time with little earnestness. Vinet founded a society among the students which had for its aim the translation of the sacred books from the original.

But his tastes were turned in the direction of literature rather than of theology. His father was alarmed by this fatal gift for verse-making, and Mademoiselle de la Rottaz became the interpreter of the paternal anxiety.

"Who can have made you imagine," answered Vinet, "that the poetic bagatelles which I let fall from my pen have any other end than that of amusement? Poetry is the confidant of my sentiments and the reflection of my pleasures. By this means I try to express the charm of

your memory, the hopes of affection, the illusions of youth, the pure joys of virtue, the recollection of former days—in a word, all that touches me nearly causes the poetic fibre to vibrate: even the delectability of the pipe which I smoke, filled with tobacco that comes from you.”

In the summer of 1816, Vinet spent three months at Longeraie (near Morges), where he directed the studies of Auguste Jaquet the future statesman. Here, for the first time, Vinet experienced the delights which are attainable by riches when purified by refined taste. It was an idyllic moment of sunshine, of liberty, and of poetry. He heard plenty of good music, and this was for him a source of the keenest enjoyment, for he “adored music.”

“One evening, as he listened to the air from ‘Œdipe à Colonne,’ ‘*Elle m’a prodigué sa tendresse et ses soins,*’ he was unable to master his emotion. On another occasion he was reading aloud the ‘Cid’ in his rich sonorous voice. When he reached the immortal dialogue—

‘Rodrigue, qui l’eût cru ? Chimène, qui l’eût dit !’

he threw down the book and rushed from the room. When his friends went in search of him, he was found sobbing on his bed.” His nervous organization was extraordinarily delicate, and his extreme sensitiveness increased to an alarming degree his capacity for suffering.

On his return from Longeraie, Vinet found the lettered society of Lausanne greatly excited on the subject of an academic competition. These literary or scientific tournaments were the passion of the town. They were opened by the candidate, who pronounced a dissertation, which was followed by a free discussion.

In this instance it concerned the selection of a professor of French literature.

Monsieur Charles Monnard presented himself as a candidate for the vacant chair. "Towards the end of the meeting, a young man of awkward appearance rose and timidly presented some objections. This was Vinet. He defended the classic authors against the tendencies of the modern Romanticists, whom he considered Mr. Monnard to have placed on too high a pedestal."

Marc Vinet was standing at the end of the room. On seeing his son rise to combat the arguments of Mr. Monnard, he was so overwhelmed that he left the place precipitately. Later, Vinet felt some remorse on account of his temerity, and he wrote Mr. Monnard a respectful apology.

"My veneration for ancient authors has perhaps betrayed me into an improper manner of exhibiting my respect. I beg you, sir, to pardon my thoughtlessness," etc.

But the elder had been so much impressed by the keen and judicious criticism of his young adversary, that he lost no time in recommending him to fill the post of Professor of Languages and of Literature in the Gymnasium of Basle.

## CHAPTER II.

*Basle—Ordination—Marriage.*<sup>1</sup>

ALEXANDER VINET left for Basle, 30th July 1817. On the ensuing day he received the following letter from his father:—

“MY VERY DEAR SON AND FRIEND,—Since your departure, you have not ceased to be present to my thoughts and near my heart. The tears you shed at the moment of separation were tears of blood for your father. Believe in my deep affection, and let me have yours in exchange. Your mother has wept bitterly, but the thought of your return and the hope of your happiness console her. Elise and Henri share her feelings, but your father is so unfortunate as to be unable to surmount his grief.”

Vinet's answer has not been preserved, but we can readily imagine that the father's tender letter helped to soothe the sorrow of those first days of exile—sorrow which found expression in many of his letters, and particularly in those which were addressed to his friends, Isaac Secrétan and Louis Leresche. He suffered greatly from the prejudices of his German colleagues.

“It is in vain that I tell myself Basle is a Swiss canton, and that Switzerland is my country. I always feel like an exile . . . the people here are absorbed in their commercial affairs, and this renders them unsociable and phlegmatic, although I believe they are sincere, and that their esteem once gained, will be firm and lasting.”

Then comes the sorrowful complaint—

“I am too much alone. . . . People were right when

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

they warned me that I should not make any acquaintances under six months. . . . As for the ladies, they seem to be enclosed in an impenetrable sanctuary. It is a wonder if one encounters half a dozen in the course of a week. . . . There is a unique invention to be seen at every window: a mirror attached to the framework, by which means the 'fair ones' can keep their eye on the passers-by without exposing their charms to the public gaze. . . . At home (in Lausanne) everything is life; here it is torpor. In Lausanne you find animated beings, in Basle only the walls of houses."

In spite of these uncomplimentary remarks, Vinet rendered full justice to all that was solid and good in the character of the Bâlois. He respects their religious spirit. "The churches are full, the doctrine is pure, the piety is sincere."

His new life was one of incessant toil.

"My occupations are innumerable. I hardly see how I am to squeeze them all in. I give three or four public lessons a day. Three times a week I receive those of my pupils who need private help, and I give to the more advanced a course of lessons on literature."

In addition to all this, Vinet preached sometimes.<sup>1</sup> He took an active part in the work of the Bible Society, and he studied Greek, Hebrew, and Exegesis in view of his ordination. The ideal, long time dreamt of, "of a quiet parsonage with Sophie," was never abandoned, although his preoccupations at this time were essentially literary.

*To M. Monnard, 26th Oct. 1818.*

"I cannot express the exquisite joy I feel in being permitted to give myself, without constraint, to the study of literature. How sweet is existence when all pleasures have a useful end, and all work is pleasure! How magni-

<sup>1</sup> Candidates for holy orders are permitted to preach prior to ordination.

ficient is this study, which embraces all that is best and highest, and which is united by a magic bond to all the faculties of man! If anything has ever made me feel the sensation of intoxication, it is noble poetry. I cannot explain the charm. . . . What should I gain by decomposing the azure of the sky?"

In spite of this joy in his work, Vinet's letters sometimes reveal the habit of ruthless self-dissection which embittered his life.

*To Sophie de la Rottaz.*

"Often in reading your letters I exclaim: 'Ah, if she only knew me as I know myself!' Morally, I am only a rough sketch. Everything is half-finished; my disposition, character, mind, virtues, and vices are only fragments. I have a smattering of everything—just enough to make me realize how little I know, and to hold before me an ideal to which I shall never attain. For instance, I suppose that I may be called *good* in the vague sense of the word. But I know nothing—absolutely nothing of the fire, the perseverance, and the devotion which render you so interesting in my eyes. I see that at every moment you find the opportunity to do good, to be of use, and I—never! I have never visited the cottage of the poor. I have never been the consoler of the unfortunate; and whence comes this omission? Ah, it is the heart that teaches this science, and mine is not large enough! I have enough for feeling, but not enough for action. What would become of me if you were not my hope? You must lay in store for me a surplus of virtue, for indeed I am not good for much."

In the midst of these moments of profound discouragement he yearned to attain his ideal.

*To Sophie de la Rottaz, May 1819.*

"I should be unhappy if my manner of life caused you to look on me as a selfish or indifferent being. Selfishness unites (or replaces) all other vices in the soul it governs.

Nothing wrings my heart so painfully as the sight of those egotistical beings who centre all their existence on themselves. I am scarcely more tolerant of those who have only one affection to which they sacrifice all the rest. It is in my opinion a kind of selfishness, quite as unpleasant as the first; perhaps more so, because it is displayed with such odious *naïveté*. I am tempted to say of such persons, with Ste. Thérèse, 'The unfortunates, they do not know how to love.' . . . I tell myself again and again, how blest I am to be called to walk through life with a woman whose generous nature is capable of both thought and love. . . . O Sophie, should we be perfectly happy if we only loved one another, and if our hearts were not filled with that divine spirit of charity which embraces all sentient beings in its pure and noble bonds?

"We, to whom God has given the power of thinking and of feeling, shall we be content with a commonplace union which excludes all interest in the rest of mankind? And in order to love one another better, ought we not to seek to love all the family of God? I often say, when I witness the tiresome narrow affection of certain married couples: 'No, my wife must not forget how to love others in order to love only me.' And I—I must not forget the needs of the rest of the world in order to devote myself wholly to my dear one. Rather let us unite all the energy of our love and all the breadth of our minds in the interests of those whom we can serve. Let us learn to weep over the sorrows of others. Let us try to keep in mind the fact that we are not united in marriage only for our own felicity, but for the good of the whole human family. After having rendered to our tender parents some of the happiness which we owe to them, let us work for the well-being of a parish, or of some beloved pupils for whose sake God will condescend to bless us. Do you believe, Sophie, that one should ever give up the idea of being of use in the world?"

Solitude, separation from his friends and from his beloved lake—all tended to imprint a character of sadness upon the letters of this period.

*To Sophie de la Rottaz, 1819.*

"I need some one to whom I can say, 'I love you,' and to whom I can consecrate my life. Nothing alarms me so much as the possibility of losing the power of loving. When I compare my present condition with that of my childhood, I am terrified. I dreamed in those days of nothing but devotion, sacrifice, and self-abnegation. . . . I would willingly have flung myself into the fire or the water for any one. And now, oh, what a difference! Sophie, you will help me to grow better."

It was to books that the solitary young professor frequently turned for consolation.

*To Sophie de la Rottaz, 1819.*

"I compare my library to a collection of balms which I apply to the wounds of my heart. In very truth, books are a blessing from Heaven! Literature is as old as the world, and to it has been assigned the task of collecting the scattered features of Beauty, and of presenting them to Humanity, which has need of beauty in order to arrive at goodness.

"Without books, slothful minds would never have discovered in Nature traces of the Ideal which alone can give value to existence. By means of books, passions are ennobled, moral delights are augmented, a new world is revealed, and man learns that life is beautiful. Is it not admirable that an author can thus reign as a king over the secret motives of the heart, can influence the moral destiny of posterity, and can engender the ideal he has himself conceived? I look on books rather as a gift of nature than as an institution of man; and these instruments of human happiness and development were doubtless included in the eternal intentions of Providence."

Vinet's chief correspondent was his father, who found time to send long letters full of minute details to his absent son. If the Sunday sermon preached by the Doyen Curtat has been interesting, its argument was faithfully recorded in the weekly budget from Lausanne.



New books were criticized, and a course of theological reading was indicated for the guidance of the future pastor.

On his side, Vinet sent his father verses and sermons, and asked for his opinion. Marc Vinet did not fail to subject his son's essays to a severe and detailed criticism.

"Your good mother has just come to me with tears in her great eyes, desiring me to let you know how fully she appreciates the sentiment which led you to address your last letter particularly to her, and to assure you of her love. Here her voice trembled, and I finished the conversation with a kiss. Your dear mother was vexed, I think, to read my remarks on your verses, which, however, were not unfavourable, with the exception of my allusion to the absence of plan. But her tenderness makes her susceptible, so that all criticism appears unjust or too severe. Pardon your father for the sake of your mother's love."

In the month of July 1819, Vinet returned to pass his final examinations in Lausanne.

While teaching others, he had pursued his own studies, not without great difficulty, as he was in a low state of health, brought on by insufficient and irregular meals; but all this was forgotten when he saw once more his beloved lake, and found himself in the arms of his friends.

Mademoiselle de la Rottaz came to Lausanne in order to learn the result of the examination on the spot.

"She left the door open in order to hear him come in, for he had said, 'If I run up-stairs whistling, you will know that I have succeeded.' He was naturally anxious, as he had not had time enough for his studies. I cannot remember if he came up-stairs whistling, but he said once: 'Ah, I was not so foolish as to let them question me. I just let myself go, and they had to listen for half-an-hour. It succeeded capitally,' he added, laughing."

Vinet was ordained immediately after the examination. He returned to Basle alone, but only for a short time.

*To Sophie de la Rottaz.*

"It is with delight that I associate you with all the occupations of my life. I picture myself returning home after the fatigue of my lectures, to read, study, walk, and laugh with you."

Then he plunges into practical details. He has found a house, cheerful, airy, commanding a fine view of the Rhine and of the open country, and "all for twelve louis per annum."

"I feel more than ever that my love for you makes me a better man, and revives religion in my heart. Ah, my dear Sophie, it is religion, and religion alone, that gives true happiness! It is the look raised to heaven that brings joy to the heart. The idea of God is linked with all pure and deep affections. This is why your image has revived in my soul the feeble flame of personal religion."

In October 1819, Vinet's marriage took place. The officiating pastor was his intimate friend, M. Louis Leresche. The wedding was simple and homely—a family gathering, where all were knit together in the bonds of sincere affection.

## CHAPTER III.

*The Methodists—Marc Vinet's Letter on Church Authority  
—Independent Views.<sup>1</sup>*

It was at Basle that Vinet first came in contact with the religious movement which was destined to stir the Protestant Churches of Europe to their depths.

His impressions were not favourable.

*To Louis Leresche, 7th Sept. 1817.*

"The town is full of Pietists, who can be recognised a mile off. *If ever I have any power, moral or political, I will spare no pains to disperse this nest of presumptuous sectarians*, who find it beneath their dignity to be simply Christian, and who only succeed in filling their heads with false mysticism, and in turning men away from the religion of Christ."

After this diatribe we are glad to note the following:  
"After all, these people have their good side."

The Pietists of Basle were not the only persons whom the young professor judged with severity. The Methodists, who were beginning to form congregations in Geneva and in the Canton of Vaud, were not viewed by him with a favourable eye.

*To Louis Leresche.*

"We have been lately honoured with the visit of some wandering idiots, known as Methodists, all citizens of

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

Switzerland, which is becoming a nest of sects, thanks to English influence. These people pretend that regeneration is a purely divine work, neither accelerated nor hindered by human effort—that it is consequently useless to give oneself the trouble to try to be better; that the men who lived before Jesus Christ are all excluded from salvation, *because they had not exercised their virtue under the influence of a revelation which had never been made to them*; that in addition to the weight of their sins they have also the weight of their virtues, which are all vices; that Bourdaloue and Saurin did not understand the scheme of salvation, for they preached morality while we must never preach anything but dogma; that in order to be Christian one must abjure reason, intelligence, and good sense (I quote their own words, which caused some one to exclaim: ‘I should like to know by *what means* they believed!’); that human knowledge ought to be rejected by every good ecclesiastic, and that one must content oneself with a certain heart knowledge which they have invented. Strange to say, these people are zealous missionaries. I really don’t know why, for, according to their theory, regeneration comes suddenly from above without any intermediary. I should never end if I were to tell you half their follies. I hope to God this mysticism will not gain ground in Switzerland!”

Vinet is hardly more favourable to the Institute of Missions in Basle, although he admits that—

“the aim is noble, and that the zeal of the pupils would overcome every obstacle *if zeal would suffice so to do*. I hear that many of the young men have been taken away from manual labour, and that they are without the elements of education. It was not thus that the Jesuits trained their missionaries. . . . In spite of my sincere respect for missions, I consider that it would not be a bad thing to Christianize our old Europe before carrying the gospel to Otaheiti. . . . These people are always furious against reason, always preaching blind faith and instant submission. I will have nothing of all this in my religion. The law of Christ is a law of light, and the apostles were not Pictists.”

Marc Vinet shared his son's hostility to the revival. "As a Protestant of the old school, brought up to respect Holy Scripture and the Church, he could not bring himself to recognise the right of the individual conscience to withstand the authority of ancient tradition. He abhorred the spirit of curiosity and the freaks of human pride. Conscience, duty, fidelity, submission—these he regarded as synonymous terms."<sup>1</sup> Vinet had been brought up in this belief, but almost unconsciously he was beginning to strike out a path for himself. We read in a letter, bearing the date of July 24, 1818, the following significant avowal:—

*To Louis Leresche, 1818.*

"I must own that while I see with pleasure my ideas developed by study, I feel with regret that many of these notions are at variance, and on many subjects I entertain a painful feeling of scepticism. To tell the truth, this causes me sorrow rather than alarm. After having slumbered for a long time on the tranquil pillow of prejudice and of ready-made opinions, one must arouse oneself and prepare for the conflict. *Is this an evil? I do not think so.* This new examination may upset some idols, but it will never weaken our respect for true objects of worship. On the contrary, it will teach us to love them better, and it will arm us against the indifference towards which we might have been led by an indolent and cowardly submission. Truths which are imposed on us run the risk of becoming as distasteful as a wife whom one has not freely chosen. If there are any sacred principles which run the risk of being endangered by this new conflict, *our sentiment guarantees and preserves them from harm.* I am happy in the consciousness that for me there are many precious truths which discussion cannot injure, because they have taken refuge in my heart. Why should I seek to support them with reasoning? If God has planted them in my heart, it would be equally illogical to attack or to defend

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

them. *Ought we not in many cases to trust to sentiment as much as to reason?*"

"The Vinet of the future," says Professor Astié, "is already here. He appears to have been led to form this conception of religion spontaneously, by the natural development of a heart that was eminently moral and religious—I might almost say Christian."

Some indications of this new spirit of independence, which "preferred conflict to a weak and cowardly submission," must have aroused the anxiety of Vinet's father; for in the following year we find him writing to warn the future pastor against the error of substituting his particular opinions for the received doctrines of the Church.

"April 1819.

"Remember that it is this faith or doctrine which you will be called to preach, and not your individual point of view. The servant of the Church owes submission to received doctrine, *and cannot without treason, without crime, deviate from the path traced for him by the Church.* Such is, I am sure, the opinion of M. Curtat, who, I am certain, will always sacrifice his individual opinion when he finds it conflicts with Church doctrine. Be on your guard, my dear son, against all innovation of doctrine—all exaltation of individual opinion. Learn to shudder at the thought of the logical result of a contrary disposition. Aim at the glory of God and the happiness of men, and have confidence in the enlightened judgments of the Church in which you are called to be, not a doctor, but a faithful minister."

Vinet's reply has not been preserved; but although we may feel sure that he received his father's warning in the spirit of love and of respect, it did not arrest him in his independent course.

*To Louis Leresche, Nov. 1820.*

"I tremble at the thought of seeing myself at the head of a parish. . . . I do not bid farewell to the calling to

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which I have been consecrated, but I wait till age has fitted me to exercise it with independence. I own frankly that although weak by nature, *my spirit rises at the idea of being dominated, and, above all, by ecclesiastical authority, which is always exclusive and intolerant.*"

Vinet's father, without giving up the hope of seeing his son one day at the head of a parish, understood his reluctance to accept a position for which he did not feel himself fitted, and the young professor was able to devote an undivided heart to the study of literature, which to him was closely connected with ethics and philosophy.

## CHAPTER IV.

*Married Life—Literary Work—Answer to the Conventicles  
of Rolle—Death of Father.*

“Charmante pauvreté, tu vaux bien la richesse.”

It was thus that Vinet had expressed himself in a poetical epistle addressed to his *fiancée*, and he was now called on to put his theory to the test of experience. All his savings had been expended on the purchase of furniture, and his only resources were his salary as professor, which did not exceed the modest sum of a hundred louis.

“You are courageous, and I love you,” had been Vinet’s answer to his *fiancée*, while energetically combating his parent’s proposal that the marriage should be delayed. And with this stock of love and courage the young couple began housekeeping.

Nothing marred the serenity of those early days of married life. Vinet always looked back on them as the happiest he had ever known. His heart was full and satisfied, and he forgot to meditate on himself. One light cloud appeared on the horizon, but it was quickly dispelled. Madame Vinet observed an expression of anxiety on her husband’s face, and after some hesitation he owned that he had contracted a debt of 300 francs (£12) for the purchase of books.

“I must have books, they are my tools,” explained Vinet. The fault was quickly pardoned, and the young



couple pledged themselves never again to anticipate their balance.

We find Vinet again singing the praises of poverty in some verses which bear the date July 8, 1819. His wife had just presented him with their first child—a daughter. Vinet was ill, and his pecuniary resources consisted of 2 francs 20 centimes, which sum had to suffice for the needs of the family till the end of the quarter.

Others might have bemoaned the difficulties of their position, but Vinet's verses only express the joy of a grateful heart.

*To M. Alexis Forel, 1820.*

"I do not know what is meant by the independence of celibacy," he wrote to a friend who was contemplating marriage. "On the contrary, it is only since my marriage that I have been really independent. The obligations of love are never heavy. And what other condition affords scope for this overflow of tenderness from two hearts that understand and love one another? Marriage is the sweet fulfilment of the sweetest of dreams."

During the temporary absence of his wife, Vinet re-read some of the letters which he had addressed her during their engaged days.

"I cannot tell you how greatly they displease me. The sentiments which they express are sincere enough, but I was bitten with the mania of 'fine writing.' . . . Let us say no more. Things are changed. I love you too well not to be simple with you. Dear Sophie, is there a union comparable to that of marriage, and are there many marriages such as ours? Should I have found with another this delicious intimacy—this perpetual confidence of two hearts who suffer from the slightest concealment?"

During the years 1820 to 1821 Vinet worked hard with his "favourite tools," his books.

The University of Basle had conferred on him the title of "Professor Extraordinary of French Literature," and Vinet felt the necessity of concentrating his reading upon one subject.

*Letter to M. Monnard, 5th May 1820.*

"My theological studies were a thorn in my side, although I love theology. But it is essential that the man of letters should have but one object in view. Unity of view is inseparable from liberty, and (here is a characteristic utterance): *Liberty alone can develope and ripen thought.* What joy to walk with firm footsteps in this vast, rich, and noble career of letters, to which are attached questions and ideas of the highest importance for the human mind!"

To his friend Leresche he wrote:—

"I have taken again to the study of Greek. No culture can be real and deep for one who has not drunk at the source of this noble antiquity which has formed and inspired all our modern classics; and it is not only taste which ought to gain by this study, but reason, intelligence—all the faculties."

The study of grammar, which he associated with metaphysics, declaring that the "two sciences were indispensable one to the other," also engaged his attention. This was a period of abundant literary vigour. He prepared a course of lectures on French literature, and to this end he read with order and method, not neglecting a page of Voltaire or of Bossuet. He wrote an article in answer to the question: "Why does not France possess a national tragedy?" He wished to contribute to a journal for the young, but this idea was abandoned. "I feel that it is far more difficult to write for children than for grown-up people. With the latter, it suffices to be on the level of one's subject; with the former, one must be above it."

With the help of his wife he began to translate the *Stunden der Andacht*.

*To M. Monnard, 5th May 1820.*

"You know perhaps that a German pastor has just given it as his opinion that the *Stunden der Andacht* is the work of the devil, which will present an entirely new view of the prince of darkness. Here the good people will not go quite so far, but we shall probably be told—first, that all this comes from Germany; secondly, that it is new; and thirdly, that it is useless to try to improve on our fathers."

While digging deep in the rich field of French literature, Vinet began to familiarize himself with the poetry and the criticism of Germany. For Goëthe he had more admiration than sympathy, but, from the first, he was strongly attracted by Schiller.

No poet was dearer to him than Salis, whose verses "breathe the love of nature and of the Fatherland."

*To M. Monnard, 6th January 1821.*

"As to meditations, have you read those of M. de Lamartine? They are beautiful, and I have read some of them with delight, but I think the man who reviles nature has no right to speak of religion. I cannot imagine a love of God which is not founded on gratitude. A friend of M. de Lamartine's has told us that the young poet has chosen melancholy for his theme, much as a musician might choose a particular string for the violin. Schiller says somewhere: 'I own it frankly, I believe in the reality of disinterested love; I am lost if it does not exist, and I renounce belief in divinity, immortality, and virtue.' And I, if I am not permitted to believe in the good faith of the masses, and if it can be proved that poets are charlatans and that we are dupes, I renounce the study of poetry, and I spurn the deceivers who have beguiled me from my childhood."

Vinet was not so absorbed in literary work as to be blind to all that was passing around him. "He was a born patriot, and his love of country stretched beyond the limits of the Canton of Vaud. He dreamed of a united Switzerland—not centralized, but one in mind, in conduct, and in hope. He hailed with joy the efforts of the founders of the Society of Zofingen to establish friendly relations among all the students of Switzerland. He longed for the birth of a national literature, inspired by the love of the Fatherland, and instinct with the breath of true religion. The idea of country and the idea of religion were united in his heart. There was patriotism in his religion, and religion in his patriotism."<sup>1</sup>

In the spring of the year 1821 an event took place which was destined to exercise a great influence upon Vinet's subsequent career.

M. Félix Neff was invited by Miss Greaves—an English lady resident in Lausanne—to spend a few days under her roof in order to assist in the formation of a missionary society. This innocent proceeding aroused the indignation of the President of the State Council, who hastened to express "*the pain with which he had seen that by an inconsiderate zeal for distant enterprizes, the law had been disobeyed.*"<sup>2</sup>

The right of free association, which had never been withheld from persons desirous of holding political, literary, or scientific meetings, was now denied to those who wished to assemble for a moral and religious purpose.

Nor was the President the only dignitary who raised his voice in opposition. The Doyen Curtat, distressed beyond measure by the logical result of his own teaching, issued a pamphlet<sup>3</sup> in which he denounced as

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

<sup>2</sup> Cart.

<sup>3</sup> *The Establishment of Conventicles in the Canton of Vaud.*

hypocritical the efforts of the "Methodists" to establish missionary societies. He complained that "the English were seeking to make the Vaudois Church the copy of English Methodism." He maintained that to establish religious meetings on Sunday evenings "would be tantamount to condemning those who spend them in card-playing, and we have no right to judge others." Who can forbear a smile as the venerable Doyen caps his argument against the propriety of evening services by gravely quoting "the fall of Eutychus"?

Soon after the issue of this protest he renounced his lessons to the candidates on account of the horror he felt at having "helped to fabricate Methodists."

Among the pamphlets called forth by the Doyen's attack was one from the pen of M. César Malan, entitled, *The Conventicles of Rolle*. It contained an account of two religious services wherein several transparent allusions had been made to the Doyen's conduct, and the following prayer had been offered on his behalf: "We beseech Thee to enlighten and to touch the heart of one who has written against our meetings. Oh, have pity on his soul. O God, show him his error: teach him to love."

These expressions roused Vinet's deep indignation. He did not concern himself with the theological opinions expressed in either of the pamphlets; but the tone of the *Conventicles of Rolle* inspired him with profound disgust.

"In very truth," writes M. F. Chavannes, "when one re-reads M. Malan's paper, and when one considers the teaching of the Revival at its dawn, one adores the patience and mercy of God, who does not despise weak beginnings."

Vinet seized his pen and wrote the following scathing reply:—

"According to your master (M. César Malan), M. Curtat has not inspired you with the love of the cross of Christ, and contempt for your own merits. Did not these verities form the basis of his teaching? It is true that he never imagined the curious mixture of humility and pride which characterizes the new doctrine, but this is because he did not aim at forming a sect and founding conventicles."

Marc Vinet warmly approved of this letter, which excited a great deal of attention, chiefly on account of the arrow let fly at the new doctrines.

The correspondence between father and son had become more intimate than ever. However jealous Vinet may have been of his independence, his spirit was not ruffled by the tone of anxiety displayed in his father's letters. He regarded it, and rightly, as a proof of tenderness, and this tenderness had overflowed more freely since Marc Vinet had held his two little grandchildren in his arms.

At the age of twenty-five, Vinet could not picture life without the love and the protection of a father.

This protection was suddenly snatched away from him. Marc Vinet died suddenly, June 8, 1822.

*To Louis Leresche, June 1822.*

"The spring of my life is broken," wrote Vinet. "I feel adrift in the world, and it is only in turning my eyes towards heaven that I feel myself clinging to something that is immutable, certain, and eternal."

On the same day, Madame Vinet wrote—

"I often think that perhaps we loved him too devotedly, that we considered his approbation too much as the end of existence, and that God has taken him from us in order that we may learn to turn our eyes and our hearts

towards Him. But how could we have loved so tender a friend less?"

The sense of loneliness of which Vinet speaks was salutary. In order to become completely master of himself, it was necessary that he should learn to walk alone.

## CHAPTER V.

*Influence of Revival—De Wette—Morality and Dogma—  
Illness—Personal Religion.*

THE obstacles encountered by the religious movement only served to add fuel to the flame, and the right of all men to worship God in accordance with the dictates of conscience began to be loudly proclaimed.

The civil authorities fondly imagined that the new ideas could be exterminated by the arrest of a few individuals, but subsequent events proved they were mistaken.<sup>1</sup> The pastor of Aubonne (M. Alexander Chavannes) was dismissed from his functions on account of his "pretended religious services" on Sunday evening. These had given rise to one of the first of those outbreaks of popular fury which disgrace the history of the canton.<sup>2</sup> Vinet was divided between two contrary sentiments. On the one hand, he was irritated by the tone as well as by the narrow teaching of the reformers; on the other, his indignation rose against the intolerance and apathy of

<sup>1</sup> Cart.

<sup>2</sup> "The Mummers must be killed," was the cry; "if these meetings continue, we shall fire the town."

It was asserted blasphemously that M. Chavannes "*found that the Father was too old for him, and that he would only speak of the Son.*"

Another pastor (M. Juvet), after reading from the pulpit portions of the Helvetic Confession of Faith, was informed that "the form of service being regulated by law, no *innovations* could be made." This same pastor found in his garden a cross on which the enemies of the gospel had nailed the image of a pig. Above was written: "A Mummer in the form of a pig." Underneath were the words: "These Mummers must be possessed of a devil to be able thus to change the form of the figure on the cross."



the Vaudois, and he recognised that the "Mummers" might do good by arousing slumbering souls. But he was already "sick of controversy."

*To Louis Leresche, Nov. 1822.*

"My soul, imbued from childhood with the spirit of a religion of love, has lost in the midst of discussion a good deal of the sentiment that rendered me so happy. My mind has been painfully impressed by these quarrels. Instead of the peaceful Eden of former days, I see a battle-field where my sentiments are discussed, my piety is regulated, and the emotions which I formerly enjoyed without effort are rigorously enforced. In former days, God seemed to be an intimate personal friend. To-day, controversial theology has come to separate me from Him."

The arrival of Professor de Wette caused great emotion in the religious world of Basle. Speaking of a certain doctor, whom the public were inclined to regard as the forerunner of Antichrist, Vinet wrote:—

*To M. Monnard, 13th Feb. 1822.*

"The real Antichrist is M. de Wette. His nomination has caused an extraordinary sensation. The wood-cutters canvass his opinions in the streets; he is universally criticized and condemned, and, as is frequently the case, the ignorant make the most noise."

As soon as de Wette began his lectures, Vinet became one of his most attentive listeners.

*To Louis Leresche, 2nd Oct. 1822.*

"You must know that during the last six months I have followed the teaching of the celebrated Professor de Wette. It has given me immense pleasure. It seems as if I had never done any exegesis before.<sup>1</sup> We have read

<sup>1</sup> "There is nothing more vivifying than the teaching of these great German theologians, who know how to be impartial in explaining a book of Scripture . . . and who remember that exegesis is the parent, and not the *maid-of-all-work* of dogma" (Astié).

in the original the Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans. The professor's doctrinal teaching is pure, his criticism is judicious, his views vast and profound. His doctrine has not always been the same. He has faithfully sought for truth, and by degrees he has obtained it. He has arrived at a pure and clearly defined orthodoxy, and he appears to me to be far more solidly anchored in the truth than those who accept a belief imposed at once and without reserve."

It is difficult to measure the extent of the influence which such teaching must have exercised upon the mind of a young man "who was still *naïf* enough to take all this for orthodoxy."<sup>1</sup>

An excellent understanding soon sprang up between the new professor and his young colleague. One of de Wette's sermons on the "Trial of the spirits" was translated by Vinet, and preceded by a preface in which the future champion of religious liberty blamed the spirit of intolerance, of which the Canton of Vaud was then the theatre, and showed himself hardly less severe towards those who were "indiscreet in their piety," whom he earnestly recommends to "seek the true communion of hearts in the love of God."

About the same time Vinet addressed to the *Journal of Christian Morality* a remarkable letter in answer to the question: "Is morality inseparable from Dogma?" He insisted on the essential connection between dogma and morality as the characteristic feature of Christianity.

"April 1823.

"The Christian religion is all of one piece—if I may be permitted to use the expression. It does not present dogma on the one side and duties on the other, and leave its adherents free to choose between them. A spiritual and sensible bond unites them inseparably, so that it is

<sup>1</sup> Astié.

equally impossible *to believe without practising, and to practise without believing*. Do not present to the people a morality founded on arguments—give them a morality based on facts. . . . God in His wisdom has given us a religion which is historical, because, if there are a few persons accessible to abstract reasonings, the immense majority can only grasp facts. Set forth then the marvellous and adorable facts of the gospel proclaiming these mysteries of love and power, and fasten to this golden chain all your precepts and all your teachings.”

“The essence of Vinet’s apologetics and of his morality are found here, and one immediately recognises the leading idea of his subsequent discourses, the profound union between morality and dogma, between faith and action: conduct that demands a motive power which cannot be anything but an affection: this affection needing an awakening—an inspiring fact: this fact realized in the redemption, which is only dogma because it is first fact,—such was Vinet’s conception of Christianity—of that golden chain of marvellous and adorable realities which constitute the religion of Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

In the spring of the same year Vinet’s anxiety was aroused by the state of his health. A painful operation had proved unsuccessful, and he was doomed to suffer for the rest of his days.

This period of physical weakness and suffering, following closely upon the workings of sorrow caused by the father’s death, was also a time of spiritual growth. Almost unconsciously, Vinet had been impressed by the questions raised by the pioneers of the revival. “Like many others, he had gone on his solitary way, obedient to the heavenly guide—who, by the voice of conscience directed him in secret—towards the personal knowledge of Christ.”

One of the indications of this change, which was

<sup>1</sup> Edmond Schérer.

operating silently in the depths of his soul with only God for witness, is that he lost for a time his poetic talent. "He lost possession of the universe in whose bosom he had lived, and from whence he had drawn his ideal of poetry, and the new universe had not yet been given him."<sup>1</sup>

*To Louis Leresche, 2nd July 1823.*

"If I have made you anxious by my silence, it was far from my intention so to do. I waited for recovery before letting you know that I had been ill. My sufferings have filled me with an anguish and a melancholy which I could not overcome, and which hindered me in the performance of my duties. At last I resolved to try the effect of rest, and I now find myself much better. In recalling how many times God has protected me in some signal way, I am resolved to put all my trust in Him. I reproach myself that this confidence has not enabled me to vanquish the dark fears that rose so often in my heart."

A relapse brought Vinet face to face with death. From this moment he never regained the vigour of health. He always regarded this period as the turning-point of his life.

"I long to see you," he wrote to his friend Leresche; "there are thoughts 'at the back of the head,' as Pascal said, which one does not care to lay bare to every one. . . . For some time, and especially since my illness, I have become more serious."

"This conversion was exclusively religious and moral, and almost unconscious of dogmatism. The verses which Vinet dictated from his sick-bed in order to preserve the remembrance of his feelings at the time, contain no trace of the favourite ideas of the revival. Another indication that while Vinet accepted the religious life of the revival, he ignored its dogmatic teaching, is found in the fact that he delivered to de Wette a certificate of orthodoxy

<sup>1</sup> F. Chavannes.

which he certainly would not have done had he grasped the full import of the doctrines held by the Genevese and Scotch teachers. In the very letter to Leresche in which he announces that he has become more serious, he marks the exact point to which he had attained."<sup>1</sup>

"I am, in my search for truth, led naturally to examine its manifestations in those who appear penetrated with zeal for it. I find myself in a painful position. I see a fervour, a sensibility which charms me, a religion in action, which claims my respect; but, looking deeper, I cannot close my eyes to singular illusions—a tendency towards what is systematic and exclusive, and often a defective logic. I do not know where to rest. The neologians, who transform religion into philosophy, inspire me with aversion. I will have none of them. I want the gospel. This letter makes my condition appear graver than it really is, on account of the vagueness of my ideas. It will make you think that I am descending to a lower plane. But I, on the contrary, feel that I am mounting. . . . I have read with the purest pleasure Erskine's work, *Reflections on the Intrinsic Evidence of Christianity*. You are right in saying that it lacks 'method;' but what sincerity, what conviction, what warmth, what new and interesting points of view! If I did not detest on principle such expressions as 'I am of Apollos' or of 'Cephas,' I could find it in my heart to say, 'I am of Erskine.' He does not shroud the gospel in darkness. He shows plainly that although we cannot conceive the 'how' of the mysteries of religion, the 'why' is perfectly accessible to our reason, and that there is no true faith without it."

In another letter we learn that Vinet had no intention of adopting the views of those who regarded poetry and art as snares of the devil.

*To M. Monnard.*

"I have been brought so near the borderland of another world during my long illness, that one might think that I

<sup>1</sup> Astié.

ought not to occupy myself any longer with the arts which make the charm of this one. But I could not shake off my love of art, '*Manet imâ mente repostum.*'

"And even if it were not my duty to busy myself with art and letters, I cannot bring myself to believe that they would be in contradiction with the solemnity of the thoughts which ought to dominate the mind of the Christian. Why should I not cultivate this intellectual domain which God has stretched between heaven and earth? Why should I not study the secrets of the noble faculties made in His image?"

"Vinet's faith, slowly acquired, was eminently personal. Hence his aversion to everything that seemed to menace the independence and individuality of belief. Vinet had doubted, but truth had conquered him and made him free. Not less sceptical than Pascal, he had arrived at firmer convictions. Pascal took pleasure in exaggerating the duality of faith and reason, while for Vinet faith becomes reason, and reason becomes faith. He had acquired by personal experience a great confidence in the power of truth, and this is a second characteristic of his religious idea. What does it matter that men are hostile and indifferent? The gospel which has reached his own heart cannot fail to reach others. Christianity is true, therefore it is a force. All that it needs is liberty. Leave it to itself, offer neither hindrance nor support, and it will conquer the world. The principle of religious liberty was the corollary of Vinet's faith, and each period of his literary existence has been marked by some work consecrated to the defence of the principle which took possession of his soul on the same day that it was vanquished by the power of Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. Scherer.



**PART SECOND.**

**1823-1837.**



## CHAPTER VI.

*Law of 20th May—Vinet on Liberty of Conscience and  
Worship—Sincerity.*

IT is essential that the character of the new religious services which awakened such violent opposition in the Canton of Vaud should be rightly understood. Persons who felt the need of religious instruction acquired the habit of gathering together in the pastor's house on Sunday evenings for this purpose. The attendants at these peaceable meetings, which may be compared to the Bible classes and mission services of the Anglican Church, were the same persons who had followed the services of the Established Church in the morning, and the idea of separation from the Church of their baptism had never entered their minds. Yet these were the meetings which the Order in Council of 15th January 1824 forbade as "contrary to religious order and public peace."

The attention of all thinking men was aroused by this incident.

"If the Government of Vaud is the chief of the State religion," wrote Baron Auguste de Staël, "what is this religion but the very doctrines of the Helvetic Confession which the persecuted ministers invoke?<sup>1</sup> . . . The house of each citizen, which in a free State should be his castle,

<sup>1</sup> At the same time M. de Staël owns that "the zeal of the young ministers has not always been tempered by prudence or charity; nor has it been always exempt from the need of *braving persecution*, which is the weakness of generous souls."

is open to inquisitorial visits. The judge appears . . . if he is told that persons are met together to drink or to gamble, he is satisfied. But if he hears any conversation on religious subjects—if he sees the Bible on the table—the meeting is pronounced dangerous. . . . The judge, who is probably only a peasant, is suddenly transformed into a doctor of theology; and if he considers that the Epistles of St. Paul are not being suitably interpreted, the master of the house becomes a criminal, and is dragged before the tribunal.”<sup>1</sup>

The Order in Council did not succeed in arresting the progress of the new movement. A true principle is a power which must achieve victory sooner or later. Here the principle was the cause of liberty itself: liberty of conscience and of worship—of free activity in the field of God, which is the world.

We find the first trace of the preoccupations which were destined to play so important a part in Vinet's future life, in a letter addressed to his friend Leresche.

“23rd March 1823.

“If you had time to add some work of another kind to your pastoral functions, I would ask you to meditate on a subject of great importance which is the source of perpetual conflicts in Switzerland, *i.e.* the mutual relations of civil and ecclesiastical authority in the Protestant Church, and in our canton in particular.”

*To Louis Leresche, February 1824.*

“I was hoping to receive from you some reflections on the events which are taking place in our country. Before pronouncing a summary judgment, I wish to hear your report. But I will say at all hazards that the measures taken by the Government alarm me greatly. . . . It seems to me that we are in a vicious circle, and that nothing can deliver us so long as we cling to the specious principle of a State religion. . . . Jesus Christ has said, ‘My kingdom

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Letters of T. Erakine*, p. 44.

is not of this world.' . . . There is nothing so spiritual, nothing so individual, as religion. . . . The protection of Government is a yoke for the Church. The conscience is hampered by its protection as well as by its oppression. . . . Liberty is the soul of religious fervour as well as the gauge of toleration. When the Government does not cause one form of religion to dominate the rest, there are doubtless irreligious men and free-thinkers, but there are fewer hypocrites and lukewarm partisans. Ministers are no longer State functionaries responsible to the civil power, and sometimes trembling before it: they are missionaries and apostles; they do not exercise a profession, they obey a vocation. Jesus Christ did not claim the protection of the great ones of the earth. He came to establish the reign of truth. Moreover, Truth ought to have an independent progress and pure triumph: she ought to vanquish by her own power. She is never so strong as when she is abandoned to her own strength. . . . In former days I had never imagined that the question of the religion of the State, so much discussed in France, could be decided in the negative by a Christian. *The events of which our country is the theatre have induced these reflections.* I know that God can extract good from evil. I trust He will do so yet."

In the following letter Vinet replies to the objections raised by M. Leresche:—

"24th February 1824.

"I do not think that a country which has grown old under the system of a State religion can suddenly place itself in the position of the United States. But I think that an entire tolerance of opinions ought to enter into the system of a wise government and of an enlightened and zealous clergy. The Reformed Church did not shake off the Papal yoke in order to accept that of the civil power. A Government that seeks to arrest the current of opinion resembles the man who seeks to stay with his puny hand the movement of a mill-wheel which a mighty mass of water causes to revolve. Government must understand that it is not instituted to *create rights* nor to

establish new social relations, but only to preserve all that has been already created by necessity and by reason. If it goes one step farther, it violates the rights which it ought to defend; and what rights can be more sacred than those of opinion and of hope?—what liberty more inviolable than that of faith? . . . If you wish the Church to be protected ‘*as in England*,’ then you must allow opinion to circulate freely, and sects to be established ‘*as in England*.’ That which is false will decay, and that which is true will endure. It is resistance which gives form to error, as the water in our fountains derives its energy from the compression to which it is subjected in the narrow channels whence it flows. Since the advent of Methodism in England, the Anglican clergy are worth a great deal more. May we not look for the same effect from the introduction of the ‘mummers’? An Englishman told me the other day that in his country the sectarian spirit is like a functionary watching at the door of every ecclesiastic and forcing him to conduct himself well. ‘Fifty years ago,’ said he, ‘our pastors were honest gentlemen, hunting, fishing, indulging in good cheer, enjoying with a good conscience all the pleasure of the world. To-day they are pastors.’”

Eight days later Vinet wrote to M. Monnard,—

“1st March 1824.

“Do you know what has become the constant subject of my thoughts? Liberty of conscience. I had thought little about it till certain events took place which appeared to compromise it, and since then it has become my fixed idea.”

In its memorable sitting of 20th May 1824, the Grand Council<sup>1</sup> confirmed the project of the law directed

<sup>1</sup> Here a word of explanation may be necessary. The *State Council* (of the Canton of Vaud) is the executive body. The *Grand Council* is the general body, corresponding to the House of Commons. We may add that the *National Council* is composed of deputies from all parts (in proportion to the population), and is the representative assembly of Switzerland considered as a whole. The *Council of States* is composed

against the "new doctrines." Nothing is sadder than the chorus of universal approbation which these measures awakened in the country. "The Canton of Vaud failed to fulfil the promise of the first years of her independent existence. *She disowned liberty.* Magistrates, pastors, politicians allowed themselves to be influenced by the anti-religious passions of a certain number of rude, ignorant men who needed repression and enlightenment. To Vinet must be ascribed the honour of having raised his solitary voice against this despicable unanimity. His pamphlet, entitled *Respect of Opinions*, appeared shortly after the promulgation of the new law.

"In this paper Vinet does not so much protest against intolerance or oppression in the ordinary sense of the word, as against the more subtle form of tyranny which overwhelms opinion with the weight of prejudice. Vinet insists that opinions have the right to manifest themselves—nay, more, that it is necessary and desirable that they should thus be manifested."<sup>1</sup>

"Justice demands that opinions should only be condemned after full and fair examination. . . . We owe no respect to error, but we do owe respect to all sincere belief. . . . The novelty of an opinion is not a reason for its rejection. It is the duty of all right-minded persons either to examine for themselves or to keep silence. . . . The feebleness which fears to examine, the obstinacy which refuses to draw comparisons, the presumption which decides every question *ex cathedra*, is unworthy of a free people. If every new opinion is to be called sectarian, and every energetic manifestation of belief fanaticism, we shall tremble for the future of the canton."

of the representatives of each canton, which sends two deputies, irrespective of population. The *Federal Council*, i.e. the governing body, is chosen from the National Council and the Council of States.

<sup>1</sup> Frederic Chavannes.

Does this mean that Vinet had gone over to the enemy, and that the *Gazette* of Zurich was right in attributing this pamphlet to a "*Mémier*"? The following letter will best answer this question:—

*To Louis Leresche, 25th October 1824.*

"If we could talk together, I would give you particulars respecting our friends at Geneva which would make you both laugh and cry. Grandpierre, whom we look on here as an enthusiast, has been anathematized at Geneva as an adversary of the gospel on account of a sermon which had seemed to them to be too strong. Will you say with me, 'O quantum est in rebus inane'?"

It is clear from the above that Vinet defends liberty of conscience for its own sake, and not on account of any particular set of opinions.<sup>1</sup> An admirable commentary on his conduct is to be found in an extract from a letter to his friend Leresche,—

*"26th May 1824.*

"I am always more and more convinced that that which God requires of us in the first place *is sincerity.*"

The rights of liberty are in Vinet's eyes the public recognition of the duty of sincerity.

"Those men are great," says Eugène Rambert, "who are able to seize with clearness and decision the ideas which respond to the genius of their epoch, but of which the crowd is not conscious." The occasion to reveal the idea over which he had long brooded in secret, was afforded Vinet by the Society of Christian Ethics. A prize was offered for the best work on *Liberty of Worship*. Vinet felt the necessity laid upon him to "undertake a combat in which were engaged the most profound convictions of his mind." It was the first time that he set himself to write *a book*. He had need of leisure, of quiet,

<sup>1</sup> Eugène Rambert.

and of strength. All these were lacking. The state of his health caused serious anxiety to his friends. He had tried the effect of the waters of Baden, and had spent some weeks on the sunny shores of the Mediterranean, but all to no purpose; partly because the malady was too deeply rooted, and partly because (here is a characteristic trait) "imprudence, fatal imprudence, caused by an excessive fear of disobliging others, has destroyed all the good effect of the cure." Nevertheless he persevered, and the book was terminated by the end of the year 1825.

In this remarkable work Vinet shows that "Liberty of conscience is the right we possess to establish our relations with the Divinity in the manner which we deem most suitable. It is the right to admit no judge save conscience. It is the perfect independence of the individual in matters of religious belief. . . . If liberty of conscience is the right of the individual, liberty of worship is the right of the community."

These, according to Vinet, "depend on one another, as speech depends on thought.

"Religion being an affair between God and man, Government has no authority in matters of religious belief. . . . The loss of religious liberty involves the loss of all other liberties. A State religion implies a rigid, official system of metaphysics, of criticism, of science, of truth in general. . . . Civil society is the outcome of an imperious physical necessity which draws men together for their common preservation. Religious society, on the contrary, is born of an instinct which is superior to terrestrial needs. It is founded on sympathy.

"Every Government becomes a pope when it takes upon itself to protect the Church. 'When kings meddle with religion, they reduce it to a condition of servitude.'" <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fénelon.

“‘What is the Episcopacy when it separates itself from the Church in order to enter into an unnatural union with the State?’ These two conflicting powers, instead of uniting, embarrass one another the moment that they are blended.”<sup>1</sup>

The article ends with the prayer that the “hearts of kings may be inspired to abolish all the hindrances that banish love, and hold the human soul under the yoke of fear.”<sup>2</sup>

On the 2nd March 1826 the committee named by the society to examine the twenty-nine manuscripts unanimously selected the paper which bore the superscription, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” M. Stapfer was desired to request the author to soften certain expressions which were calculated to give pain to members of the Roman Catholic communion. To this Vinet willingly acceded.

“1st April 1826.

“I feel that if on one side truth must never be sacrificed, on the other it must never be separated from charity.”

M. Stapfer hastened to express the gratitude of the committee for the proposed changes.

“Many of my colleagues, MM. Guizot, the Duc de Broglie, MM. de Keratry and de Remusat, were so captivated by your manuscript that they could not leave it till it had been read from end to end.”

This correspondence was the beginning of a friendship which exercised an important influence upon Vinet's life.

<sup>1</sup> Bossuet.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note *en passant* Vinet's opinion respecting the oath: “The oath, being an act essentially religious, belongs to the domain of conscience. It is difficult to see how a civil society could prescribe an action which has no connection with the order of ideas on which it is founded. The oath can be received, but *it can never be imposed.*”



## CHAPTER VII

*Vinet's Letters—Change of Opinion—De Wette—  
Influence of Stapfer.*

1824-1826.

It is to Vinet's correspondence that we must turn if we would follow the history of his moral and religious progress step by step.

We find the germs of some of the most characteristic features of his teaching in the following letter :—

*To Louis Leresche, 26th May 1824.*

"I will try not to forget that if faith leads to virtue, virtue strengthens faith, and he who acts in accordance with the love of God and of men, and who seeks to do the 'will' of his Father in heaven, cannot fail to learn 'the doctrine' that comes from Him.<sup>1</sup> . . . Although the Christian is bound to work directly for the conversion of his brethren, he can best influence them by a Christian life. A life of purity, of charity, and of candour pleads strongly the cause of the gospel."

Again he returns to this theme in a subsequent letter,—

*To M. A. Forel, 22nd September 1824.*

"I think with you that sincerity is the first thing that is asked of us, as also it is the sole means of arriving at truth. But sincerity is something positive and active. It is the desire and the search for truth. No one is obliged to believe without proof, and no one is dispensed

<sup>1</sup> See this idea developed in the sermon on Law and Grace, *Discours sur quelques sujets religieux.*

from the duty of seeking it. . . . It is not sincere to disobey the voice of conscience which urges us to seek light on subjects of eternal importance.

"Religion is not a science: it is not a series of external facts submitted to our reason. The human heart is both the subject and the instrument of this study. Certainly, there have been in the order of time prophecies and miracles which have established the divinity of religion, but there is in all ages a living witness we can consult, to wit, the heart.

"It is by the heart we shall learn to know if the Messiah, who appeared in Judæa at a certain period, is a Being whose coming was necessitated by the craving of the human soul. It is by the heart that we shall learn to know if the Holy Spirit is really essential to our increase in holiness; and we may say the same with regard to all the other doctrines. While acknowledging that religion is an external fact which takes its place in history, we must also affirm that it is of the same date as the human heart, it harmonizes with its needs, and must be judged by it.

"We are not called upon to penetrate the mystery of the divine essence, nor to grope our way in the uncertain glimmer of a subtle system of Metaphysics. . . .

"To study our own heart, and to consult the religious experience of those who have consecrated their lives to the service of Christ—*this is the first means*. To study the gospel and some of the books that explain and apply its system—*this is the second*. Among the latter I will name *Reflections on the Intrinsic Evidence of Christianity*, by Erskine, and the *Application of the Principles of Christianity to Commerce and to the Affairs of Civil Life*."

We see by the above that Vinet had already grasped the idea that man must go "from Christ to the Scriptures, rather than from the Scriptures to Christ."<sup>1</sup> Here Vinet strikes clearly enough the note which was to resound in his later teaching. But on other points we mark a change of attitude.

A letter written in 1825 indicates this transformation.

<sup>1</sup> Astié.

Vinet deplores the nomination of Hagenbach because he represents "the same tendency as de Wette," whose work on Ethics Vinet's scruples had obliged him to renounce the project of translating.

He now writes that—

"Humanly speaking, it is a bad plan to give as pendant to one neologian a professor of the same fibre.

"Hagenbach is but the echo of de Wette . . . they demolish to perfection, but no one can see that they build up. . . . Humanity must have something to believe. It will not raise altars to those who have only learned to doubt.

"It is miserable work tearing down the old monuments which have resisted the sapping effect of time."

We see that the great critic is no longer the "orthodox" professor whose praises Vinet sang in 1822. This new severity is all the more striking from the fact that de Wette was on the point of effecting a reconciliation with the Pietists, and that the adversaries of religion directed an attack against de Wette, and against the University of Basle in general, as the "refuge of fanaticism and bigotry." It was not de Wette who had changed, it was Vinet.

In the person of Stapfer, Vinet hailed at once a kindred spirit and a master.<sup>1</sup> In order to understand the nature of the influence exercised by the Bernese theologian, it must be borne in mind that he belonged to the old school of Tübingen (represented in England by Paley). Stapfer was one of those who esteemed the Bible to be a code of revealed doctrines. He held, with the addition of more science, the same theological views as the French and Swiss "Pietists." But he believed that he was able to justify, by means of reason, the theology

<sup>1</sup> Astié.

which they taught, while condemning the efforts of the human understanding. The influence of Stapfer had the effect of pushing Vinet more and more in the direction of the doctrines of the revival by removing the stumbling-blocks cast in his way by ignorant "Pietists."

The disciple has written a preface to the works of the master,<sup>1</sup> which show to all who know Vinet, that in writing the history of Stapfer he has described his own.

We know that already, in 1818, Vinet seeing the basis of certainty escape him, appealed, as did, at a later period in our own country, Frederick Robertson, to those "grand landmarks of morality" which do not need the support of reason. Stapfer had brought back from Germany "all the anguish of doubt." But he did not resign himself to this condition. "The soul was called into council, it brought a new element—it explained that which it alone has the power to explain—the faith of early years was reconquered, and Stapfer embraced the gospel with all the faculties of his being."<sup>2</sup>

M. Stapfer avowed that the illustrious founder of critical philosophy had largely contributed to the solution of his doubts.

"It was through reading Kant's work on 'Religion considered within the Limits of Reason,' that the young student learned to recognise the limits of pure reason and of the understanding, and the competency of reason and of the moral sense in questions of this order. Kant had led him to this point. He pursued without him the rest of the route. All the philosophy of Kant confirmed the impression received from the first work. This philosophy, unconsciously Christian, afforded to religious investigation a criterion analogous to that to which Christ Himself had submitted His teaching, and at

<sup>1</sup> *P. A. Stapfer: His Life, his Character, and his Writings*, by A. Vinet.

<sup>2</sup> A. Vinet.

the same time it brought to nothing the pretension of the human mind to know things as God knows them, but reduces its knowledge to a form which is purely human. It is under the shadow of these principles that the faith of M. Stapfer found refuge, and subsequently it found by means of personal communion with its object, by experience and by practical application, a safe, impregnable asylum."<sup>1</sup>

We learn from the above that Stapfer held out the means of safety at the very time that he was forcing his young disciple<sup>2</sup> deeper and deeper into those waters of Pietism wherein so many noble thinkers have made shipwreck. Some letters, dated from the baths of Louèche, throw considerable light upon this stage of Vinet's religious development.

*To Louis Leresche, July 1826.*

"I offered to hold a religious service for the Protestants, and a goodly number, including a few Catholics, assembled in the saloon. I preached on the pool of Bethesda with great emotion, and had the happiness of seeing it shared by my hearers. I noticed that it was the idea of Jesus Christ as our liberator and our best friend that touched the assembly. . . . I do not see among the evidences of Christianity any proof of greater value than the moral transformation of hearts that are attracted by the gospel. . . . Even men of the world admit its moral system, forgetting that all that is most pure and sublime in this morality is attached to dogma, or rather to the great fact of redemption. . . . Not that it suffices to preach dogma. Christianity must be incorporated *in the life*. Why did the apostles not content themselves with telling the story of the cross? Why did Jesus Christ *teach*? To act against these indications is to ignore human nature. It is perfectly true that charity cannot exist apart from faith, but it is also true that one can believe and be wanting in charity."

<sup>1</sup> Vinet.

<sup>2</sup> Astié.

*To Louis Leresche, 8th October 1826.*

"In order to feel the immensity of love and goodness that is involved in the work of Redemption, it is essential not to lose sight of the fact, that to avoid striking humanity, God strikes Himself in that which is dearest. . . . If God had been represented to us as indifferent in the choice of a victim, where would be the moral side of redemption? Neither justice nor mercy is satisfied by such a course of action; but if God *strikes Himself*, they are entirely conciliated. . . . Theologians do well to insist on the idea that the sacrifice of Christ was a voluntary act. But the merit of having willed the salvation of man by His blood is no less real of God. If the Son came to suffer, the Father sent Him. There is as much love in the one as in the other. We cannot admit that God the Father is all justice, and that God the Son is all pity. If God has done nothing but permit an exchange of victims, how can we feel for Him the love that He claims? We should carry it all to Christ, after the manner of those who refuse to see in His work of redemption anything deeper than an act of justice—a distinction which is daring, dangerous, and anti-scriptural. 'God *so loved the world*, that He gave His only-begotten Son.'"

## CHAPTER VIII.

*Extracts from Journal and Letters*<sup>1</sup>—*Cette*—*Observation and Description*—*Baths of Louèche.*

1825–1826.

THE following extracts will show that Vinet's letters were not exclusively confined to theological subjects. They afford evidence of the keenness of observation, which was one of his peculiar gifts.

A journal permits us to follow him on the way from Basle to Cette. After confessing that his "eyes were full of tears" when he bade farewell to his "two dear children" (Stephanie and Auguste), he proceeds to describe his travelling companions.

"21st April 1825.

"I found seated in the diligence a young merchant from Besançon whose physiognomy was pleasant and intelligent. No one is ever as communicative as a Frenchman! My companion related his entire biography. It contained nothing remarkable, and yet my mind was riveted by it as by a story of Walter Scott's, so strongly is it in the power of man to interest his fellow. At Belfort our party was augmented by the entrance of a law student, an engineer officer, and a merchant. When I travel, I amuse myself by trying to determine the station in life of my companions, revealed by numberless small circumstances which betray the most reserved—the turn of conversation, the habits, even the position in sleeping give the clue. This interests me so keenly, that were I in good health, I should never find a journey tedious. Nothing is more

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

amusing than the accumulation of a series of conceptions which melt one into the other, till one obtains a personality altogether different from the first impression. . . . The conversation was as instructive as it was varied. Politics were not mooted, but we had instead stirring reminiscences of a soldier's career, and interesting details on the subject of various industries in their relation to the army and navy."

An incident which took place on his return from Cette brings into strong relief the sensitive delicacy of Vinet's conscience. A certain M. Grandpierre, who had lived for some time under his roof, exercised so irritating an effect upon Vinet's nerves—weakened, it must be remembered, by constant physical suffering—that he decided at last to beg him to seek some other dwelling. We wonder if it was in reference to this question that Vinet once wrote in his Diary: "He who loves not the brother whom he sees"—alas! "it is just the brother one sees it is so difficult to love."

M. Grandpierre's love of controversy and the extreme rigidity of his views would have rendered him a trying companion to most people, and still more so to one who had absolute need of tranquillity, and who was the victim of a painful malady. But Vinet's self-reproach was none the less poignant.

"I tremble when I reflect on the step that I have just taken. I have been unjust, dissimulating, impatient, hard, selfish. I am afraid of myself. My Father, have pity on Thy child!

"Our friend has ceased to be our guest, but he remains our friend." (This proves clearly enough that Vinet had in reality been neither "hard" nor "selfish.") "This letter will show you that I am little advanced in charity and Christian patience, because I still need natural sympathy to enable me to live with people. The evil is that I have no heart; and I am tempted to believe that when my heart seems to speak, it is only imagination after all."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare this with Vinet's theory of the "Concentric Soul." Essay on "Jocelyn."



Vinet's complaint is always the same. He feels inferior to the ideal he pursues, and nothing will satisfy him save perfection.

After the baths of Cette, Vinet was sent to try the effects of the waters of Louèche (Valais). As he journeyed towards his Alpine retreat accompanied by an uncle, Madame Vinet was hurrying to Dieppe, where a friend lay seriously ill.

Had they not resolved, years before, that marriage should not make them unmindful of the sorrows of others?

*To Madame Vinet.*

"Here we are at Louèche. It is a village composed of wooden dwellings situated immediately below the Gemmi, which you can picture as a prodigious wall of hewn stones lined with battlements.

"They tell you: 'That is the way to the Canton of Berne.'

"'On wings, I suppose?'

"'No, on mules.'

"The bare idea is enough to give one the vertigo! On the other side of the village stretch fine meadows, intersected with paths which lead up to mountains white with snow, and to a glorious glacier which I should certainly visit were I strong enough. As it is, I content myself with gazing from afar on the immense surface of dazzling whiteness, lightly touched with blue. Its aspect has something sublime which sets me dreaming. All these 'horrors' are magnificent. Now let me pass to other horrors—that is to say, to our lodging."

After describing the dark, narrow chambers, he continues:—

"I have reflected on my discontent, and I realize that part of it must be ascribed to vanity. I feel humiliated to live with people of *low condition*—as if there were any such for the Christian! . . . Compared with the coarseness and vulgarity of their language and manners, it is of

small consequence that we use leaden spoons and eat turnip fritters.

"This morning I set forth to visit the hot springs above the village. We found ourselves in the midst of the most beautiful meadows I ever beheld. The path leads to the 'Dala'—the torrent which comes from the 'glacier' of the same name, and which pours its grey water and its white foam across the rocks.

"A quantity of trees grace the precipitous banks, which are carpeted with the blue blossoms of a fine species of geranium.

"Farther on, a green hillock met the eye, surmounted by a simple cross. Below, we found a little stream of water which reddened the earth. This is the mineral spring. The water does not gush forth: it escapes from the pores of the earth, and only indicates its exit by means of tiny air-bubbles.

"These air-bubbles—the only visible signs of hidden activity—showed forth the power of a Divine Hand furnishing without stint the remedy which suffering humanity comes to seek from far and wide.

"And it is in an almost inaccessible solitude, discovered by hunters, that this treasure is concealed. I was moved to tears!"

*To Louis Lerresche, July 1826.*

"The douche is a diversion which I recommend you not to indulge in unless you are obliged.

"My doctor tells me that it produces the effect of sunshine on butter, and this elegant comparison encourages me to persevere.

"When I am thoroughly melted I shall find no difficulty in leaving the place. I shall flow with the torrent from the Dala to the Rhone, and from thence to Leman. Then it is to be hoped that the running waters will have sufficiently coagulated me to allow me to pay you a visit in my natural form."

The following extract affords an instance of the charm of Vinet's personal influence:—

"31st July.

"Yesterday, something took place which caused me more pleasure than I can express. A servant brought to my room a bottle of choice wine—refusing to say by whom it was sent. To-day I have learned that it came from a man who was touched by one of my prayers yesterday.

"I had heard nothing to his advantage. Indeed he is well known as the hero of more than one unpleasant adventure. I have never spoken to him: he has only heard me at our Sunday service. There is something striking in this proof of kindly feeling on the part of such a man."

On his return to Basle, Vinet resumed his lectures at once, and he put the finishing touches to his essay on *Liberty of Worship* before placing it in the printer's hands. His active mind planned fresh enterprises. He wished to extend the study of history, and to apply its method to religion.

*To M. Monnard.*

"The history of the opinions and of the systems which each science has produced, does it not form an important part of the study of the aforesaid science? Ought we not to insist on the advantage of studying languages historically? Do we not recognise with Fénelon the utility of the application of this method to religion, which in its nature is all history?"

"6th Nov. 1826.

"I have been thinking of late," he wrote to his wife, who was still absent, "that if I had better health and fewer lessons I should find much pleasure in my work. . . . The worst of it is, that I have confused my head and wearied my heart with things that would not have troubled a man of firmer character. My position as a man of letters ought to place me above many things, and even prevent me from perceiving them. If I could recover something of my old intellectual life, I might succeed in my career; for, in the measure of my feeble capacity, I have learned to base my literary ideas on the great principles which ennoble all human knowledge.

"For the future, I must live more in my study and less in the parlour. But I cannot neglect my dear mother. I like to have her near me, and to interrupt my work from time to time to say a word to her. She is the true centre around which the family life is grouped."<sup>1</sup>

It must not be imagined that Madame Vinet allowed her husband to be harassed by household cares. His time was encroached on by visits, and by requests for counsel and help. It is touching to see this thinker, already overcharged with work and worn by suffering, finding time to write letter after letter to recommend a friend, or to give occupation to some German pupil. His numberless letters, all written in a delicate, regular hand, and hardly containing any erasures, are a living proof of this need of perfection, which he brought to bear on all the spheres of his activity.

On returning to his lectures, his books, his pupils, Vinet could not refrain from thinking of the career that opened before him, and of the obstacles that impeded his progress. As usual, his health was the principal hindrance.

*To Louis Leresche, 8th Oct. 1826.*

"I have not mastered the enemy yet. I do not know what I have brought back from Louèche except a fund of good humour, which is not exhausted yet."

His wife was still watching by the sick-bed of her friend when Vinet wrote these words. At last the sacrifice was accomplished, and he was able to write,—

*"30th Dec. 1826.*

"You will learn with pleasure, dear friend, that my dear wife has come back after an absence of six months and two days. Do not laugh at these *two days*, but be grateful that I have not inflicted upon you the number of hours, for I assure you that I have counted them all."

<sup>1</sup> Vinet's mother and sister had taken up their abode under his roof since the death of his father.

## CHAPTER IX.

*"Letter to a Friend"—Political and Social Questions—  
Religious Problems—Death of Mother.*

1826–1828.

THE memoir in favour of *Liberty of Worship* was published in Paris at the close of the year 1826. Its appearance was hailed with delight in French Switzerland, where it created a great sensation. But the approbation was not unanimous. An article from the pen of M. Guillaume de Felice (the future professor of Montauban) pointed out that the question was not properly stated, and that before preaching liberty of worship, it would be well to preach *toleration*. "Thanks to the sense which the eighteenth century had given to this word, it had become the synonym of religious indifference, if not of incredulity. Pious men rejected the idea of toleration as a sign of doubt; and if a minority lay claim to liberty, it was always in the name of truth, of which they believed they held the monopoly. They were quite ready to be intolerant in their turn towards error. It was not in the name of truth, but in the name of conscience, that Vinet claimed for all men, without distinction, perfect liberty in religious matters."<sup>1</sup>

His answer to M. de Felice was made in the form of a pamphlet, entitled *Letter to a Friend* (27th July 1827), wherein he shows that—

<sup>1</sup> Astié.

"Liberty of conscience is as inalienable a right as all others of which society guarantees our possession. . . . It is a political necessity, a social need. . . . It is not enough to preach tolerance as an evangelical virtue. Religious liberty must be established as a right."

Vinet was instinctively opposed to the modern socialist idea of the State assuming all the functions of society, absorbing all tendencies, and taking upon itself the destiny and mission of a nation. For him the State was a condition rather than an end. While others sought to strip the individual for the good of the State, Vinet only claimed that which belonged to it of necessity as a condition of social existence. In the religious question are confronted the two opposing systems—individualism and socialism.

Monsieur Monnard had wished to insert a notice of the *Letter to a Friend* in the *Nouvelliste Vaudois*, but the Committee took fright at the idea.

*To M. Monnard, 2nd February 1827.*

"I should have to spend some time in Lausanne," wrote Vinet, "and thoroughly saturate myself with its spirit, before I could understand what would give offence in your article. . . . How is it that a new people can be so easily frightened by a little novelty, while others, who appear riveted to their ancient institutions, enjoy far more liberty of speech and thought? . . . How often, while reading the papers and books of the time, have I not regretted that politicians should be so seldom Christian, and that Christians should concern themselves so little with politics! . . . It is essential that Christians should take part in public affairs, provided that they do so as *Christians*; that is to say, in the spirit of charity and love. Why should they not bring to the positive affairs of the world the weight of their doctrine, and their pure, calm wisdom derived from God?"

Vinet's interest in political affairs was not confined to Switzerland.

*To Louis Leresche, August 1827.*

"I have just heard of Canning's death. . . . I can never cease to deplore the loss of the great Minister who solemnly expressed his ardent longing for the religious and civil liberty of the two hemispheres, and to whom the unfortunate Irish would have owed their emancipation sooner or later."

Vinet followed with keen attention the efforts of the Count de Sellon to abolish capital punishment.

*To Count de Sellon, 9th September 1827.*

"You defend men's lives because their souls are dear to you, and therefore you will not rob them of one of the precious moments in which the grace of God might act with power. . . . It seems to me that one could not possess a living faith in the gospel and at the same time approve of capital punishment."

In a subsequent letter he sketched the plan for a benevolent society, which included an establishment for liberated convicts and one for vagrants on the plan of the Dutch Home Colonies.

About the same time a new literary scheme, which he hastened to impart to his friend M. Monnard, presented itself to his mind.

*To M. Monnard, November 1827.*

"I am busy with an undertaking which will fill most of my leisure hours this winter. It is a French *Chrestomathie* in the style of Noël and Laplace, but on a different plan; fewer pieces, but a wider and more classical selection, with notes on the authors and their style."

But all these preoccupations, social, literary, and political, were subservient to the one aim of seeking the

kingdom of God and His righteousness. Vinet's letters prove abundantly, that while anxious to secure religious liberty for the Church at large, he yearned still more for deeper heart knowledge of the truth which alone can make men free.

*To Louis Leresche, October 1827.*

"I have undertaken a systematic reading of the gospel in the hope of drawing its pure teaching direct from the source.

"I hold myself aloof from received opinion, and as soon as a passage suggests a reflection or presents a difficulty, I write my naked idea down on a bit of paper, which already presents a singular disparity of ideas. I feel more and more the harmony which reigns in the gospel and which is disturbed by man. There are passages which are hard to swallow, especially for those who hold extreme opinions, and yet they are not there for nothing. I have heard it said that at certain epochs when some dogmas have fallen into disuse, it is on those one must insist, speaking less of others which counterbalance them. I am not of this opinion. I think that one must endeavour to show all sides at the same time. Truth is only truth when it is entire."

*To M. Alexis Forel, November 1827.*

"I feel the same repugnance that you do for a certain form of theology which is dominated by some dogma of secondary importance. . . . Predestination, as a question of philosophy, appears to me to be a thesis which one can sustain or deny with equal advantage. In theology it is founded on certain formal passages which need to be balanced, modified, and explained by other arguments. We must try not to see more in these texts than they really teach, and we must carefully ascertain *what rank*, so to speak, this dogma of predestination holds in the gospel scheme. . . . It is only too true that the 'Good News' excites the repugnance of the natural man. . . . Let us not add to this repugnance by loading the gospel with



our own pet ideas, and turning and twisting and disturbing the precious balance of truths which characterize Christian doctrine."

*To M. Monnard, January 1828.*

"M. de Wette has just made me a present of his last work, *Ueber die Religione*. He treats the same subject as does M. Benjamin Constant; but while the latter follows the religious sentiment in its different adventures, and shows how it is transformed, disfigured, or purified in proportion to the changing state of society, the idea of the German author is rather to seek at the basis of all the religions of the world (and even of all its superstitions) the 'divine spark' which he, in common with Benjamin Constant, calls the religious sentiment. This he considers to be the basis and essence of religion, whilst subordinating to it, somewhat indiscreetly it may be, the Erkenntniss (objectivity).

"The favourite idea of de Wette, as of the other idealists of our epoch, is that the facts stated in Revelation are only a symbol, an image of certain ideas. And these ideas, who creates them? There is to my mind great danger in this point of view. With such principles each man can create a religion which he will frame as well as he can in the evangelical system. Kant has given, if not the first, at least the most memorable example in his *Exposition of the Harmony of the Christian Religion with Natural Religion*. God has willed that we should come to a knowledge of the truth and of salvation by means of the Word and the Spirit. These thinkers subordinate the Word to the Spirit, but this spirit is their own."

To sum up the theology of de Wette in a few lines would be an impossible task. While clinging firmly to the objective, historical side of Christianity, the eminent critic attached primary importance to subjective impressions, believing that the religious sentiment is the means whereby man rises from the finite to the infinite. By the emotions and the enthusiasm which this sentiment

awakens, the heart is prepared for the reception of divine truth. As these subjective impressions have their root in actual fact, it is scarcely fair to accuse de Wette of having sought to create his own religion, and, at a later period, Vinet would probably have judged him with less severity.

Many will feel inclined to echo Vinet's complaint that there is "something lacking in the religious literature of our day."

"21st February 1828.

"We need something large and simple and straightforward. . . . I have seen with pain the subtleties by which these writers seek to justify a hard saying of Abraham's, while they fling the epithet 'worldling' at the heads of those who are puzzled by this saying, as if a Christian were debarred from seeing difficulties in a passage! It is the tendency of some persons to see no stain in the personages whom God has honoured with His revelation. They tell us that we must look at everything with the eye of faith, as if faith could ever change and confound the eternal principles of good and evil; as if faith itself did not teach us never to give to a good cause the support of bad means; as if the moral spirit of the Bible was not one of the proofs that one alleges in its favour: the criterion of its truth. And where is the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ if simple men have been perfect?"

"Oh, the distance is infinite between Him and the most holy among them! You have said it yourself: *The moral authority of Paul is not the same as that of Jesus*. By twisting ideas and facts, one can only arrive at one of two results,—either to change the moral principles of those who are taught to believe that the end can justify the means, or to cause scandal to others by making them believe that Christianity sanctions this fatal maxim.

. . . "M. Blanc has insisted with energy on the principle that I invoke, namely, the invariability of the moral law, and he has done it in order to condemn the action of Judith. Why has he not said something about Jael, whose conduct is equally infamous?"

"This example would not have embarrassed him if he had taken as point of departure the principle that the actions of Biblical personages are not our rule of life, and that the most eminent have diverged from the path of right."

In the summer of the same year, a severe domestic affliction bowed Vinet to the earth.

*To M. Forel, June 1828.*

"I have lost my mother," he wrote. "It is flesh and blood that say, *I have lost*. The spirit ought to speak another language. One has not lost that which has been deposited in sure and loving hands. . . .

"God, who has profoundly afflicted me, has also given me the sweetest of consolations—that of seeing our mother fall asleep in His arms, full of a childlike confidence in His promises of mercy. . . . You would have recognised a divine phenomenon in that which we had the happiness to witness—the calm augmenting in proportion to the suffering—humanity effacing itself from day to day, and all the faculties of the soul becoming absorbed in love, and operating a glorious transfiguration during those last moments. There is in the contemplation of these solemn scenes a force of conviction which is worth all the reasoning in the world."

But even this keenly felt affliction could not turn his mind from the contemplation of the religious problems which interested him so deeply.

*To M. Isaac Secrétan, 29th June 1828.*

"It is useless to wish either to defend or to attack Christianity by means of abstract reasonings, and, so to speak, *à priori*. Although I believe that the fact of its truth makes it eminently rational, I think that reason and metaphysics can only conduct us to the threshold of the sanctuary. One can follow the teaching of dogmas which establish the necessity of a satisfaction (*Genugthuung*); but, arrived at this point, what can metaphysics do?

This 'satisfaction,' as it is presented in the gospel, is not rational, and yet it is the only way to unravel the great knot.

"Must we then adopt another plan, and devote ourselves to historical research? The result of these researches is *belief* rather than faith. . . . Personal experience is one of the means that God uses to conduct us to the truth. I have felt something of this lately when overcome by the thought of a life of sin, feeling that I could only cling to the idea of *mercy*, and convinced that the violated moral order imperiously exacts a reparation that I had not the power to offer.

"I have keenly felt the necessity of the atonement offered by the gospel, and without which it would be useless, and even fatal, to believe in God. I do not grasp the idea of substitution which serves as basis to the doctrine of redemption, but who will ever grasp it? This is not what troubles me! That which troubles me—it is not to love Jesus as much as I ought to love Him."

*To Louis Leresché, 1828.*

"I have received an interesting letter from Isaac, who attacks me respecting an expression which I made use of in my last letter concerning redemption. . . . I incline to think that he is in error, but this error is allied with a loyalty which cannot fail to bear good fruit. *There is a way of being in the right, which falls short of his way of being in the wrong.*"

In the course of the summer Vinet was ordered to try the effects of a second water cure at Louèche. He was accompanied thither by his sister, who was also ill, and by his son Auguste, who was threatened with deafness, and who suffered from a complication of infirmities. He spent the month of August nursing his sister and his son, and endeavouring to nurse himself, but with little success.

On his return to Basle the void caused by his mother's death seemed greater than ever.

*To Louis Leresche, September 1828.*

"It is better to leave to your imagination all the changes that the death of our beloved mother has brought to us. In the midst of absorbing occupation sorrow may sleep for a while, but in solitude and silence it revives, and one seems to behold the form of the dear mother who was so humble, so patient, so devoted,—who sought to bear every one's burden, and to give up her own will, following the example of her Saviour, who came into the world not to be ministered unto, but to minister,—who was never either pretentious or exacting, and whom the slightest mark of attention penetrated with gratitude. Her nature was so tender, so loving, so easily touched, and her heart so simple, that she believed without effort and hoped without doubt. Her last moments are a precious memory. She showed herself gentle towards death, as she was towards everything else. . . . The bitter drop is the sense of not having made her happy as we ought to have done.

"The authors of my being are now gone to their eternal rest. I was born, I think, to be a son, an obedient son, all my life. As long as I had their counsel to enlighten, and their approbation to calm me, life did not seem so terrible. I am now in a totally different position: I find myself the head of the family. Alas! this rôle does not suit me. To you I can confide my sense of feebleness. To others I could not own it without a blush."

## CHAPTER X.

*Trial of M. Monnard and of Vinet—"Observations"—  
"Essay on Liberty of Conscience"—Observations.*

1829.

IN the month of January 1829 an event took place which brought once more to the front the question of religious liberty.

An evangelist, travelling through the canton, held at Payerne a religious meeting, which was dispersed by an angry mob. The evangelist was first arrested, then released on bail; but as he was leaving the town he was attacked, insulted, and bespattered with mud by the enraged populace. The *Gazette* (the organ of the Government) proceeded to comment on these disgraceful proceedings as follows:—

"Look at this handful of men who, without vocation and without legitimate title, usurp ecclesiastical power in the heart of the canton, appoint a priesthood, create new Churches, and introduce schism and disorder," etc.

The discussion was thus placed on Vinet's favourite ground. He sent his reply in the form of a letter destined for the *Nouvelliste Vaudois*, but the Committee refused to insert it. He accordingly requested M. Monnard to publish it as a pamphlet. A thousand copies were sold in a few days. Never had Vinet showed himself more intrepid or more eloquent.

"Society ought to protect unity of worship," says the *Gazette*.<sup>1</sup> "History, knowledge of human nature, and common sense teach us that this would be a rude task. What! all these moral and independent beings, all these imaginations, all these souls,—are they to be brought to accept the same form of religion? What new force has Society received that she should now succeed when fifteen centuries have failed?"

"Measure, if you can, the evils that have been poured upon the world by this impious system of external unity."

"Yes, impious is the word, for if it be an impiety to deny GOD, is it not an impiety to deny conscience, which is His voice, His organ, His representative in our souls? To deny conscience, is it not to deny Him? For if there be no conscience, there is no longer any distinction between good and evil; and if this does not exist, *what is God?*"

Once aroused, Vinet did not stop here. The *Gazette* had inquired, What name should be given to a "citizen who braved the law"?

"The word is easily found," answered Vinet; "he is seditious, rebellious in the eyes of the law. But laws themselves are sometimes rebellious to the eternal law of righteousness. Placed between the two, a citizen can remember that he is a man and a Christian. If, in the necessity of choosing between his fellow-creatures and his Master, he decides for Him by whom kings reign, by whom legislators make laws and magistrates execute justice, his name may be inscribed on the list of outlaws here below, but he is numbered among the loyal and faithful citizens of the kingdom of heaven. . . ."

"An unjust law ought to be respected although unjust when it only injures my personal interest. But an immoral law, an irreligious law, a law which obliges me to do that which my conscience and the law of God condemn, if it cannot be revoked must be braved."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Observations on the article on Sectaries inserted in the *Gazette*," March 13, 1829.

<sup>2</sup> We are reminded of Bishop Trelawney's famous answer to King

"This principle, far from being subversive, is the principle of the life of society. It is the struggle between good and evil. Suppress this conflict, and what is left to check the downward progress of humanity on the fatal slope of vice and misery? . . . It is from revolt to revolt, if one insist on employing this word, that society becomes perfect, that civilisation is established, that justice reigns and truth flourishes." . . .

Vinet terminates the article by turning the words of his adversary against him.

"Look at these half-dozen individuals. . . . See these twelve fishermen who, without vocation, without legitimate title (according to the eyes of the flesh), usurp ecclesiastical power, appoint a priesthood, name missionaries and preachers—these twelve fishermen were the apostles.

"Look again at the handful of men who, in the sixteenth century, without vocation and without legitimate title, constitute themselves as an ecclesiastical power—these were our glorious Reformers.

"See, in all ages, those illustrious champions of light who have sought to establish among men the priesthood of truth,—what have they been called by their contemporaries? What pagan Rome called the apostles, and what Papal Rome called the Reformers, was precisely what you call these troublesome evangelists.

"All you say of them has already been said of Paul and of Cephas, of Calvin and of Luther, of Ramus and of Descartes. . . . Let us admit that their contemporaries were not less sure of what they were doing in scorning them than you are in scorning these sectaries. Let us admit also that in all periods of the world's history, under this same title of champions of truth, impostors and madmen have risen up, and have excited as much enthusiasm as the noble heroes whose zeal they parodied, and have encountered a like hostility. Their own generation may

James II. "Vinet," says M. Astié, "preached on this subject the same obedience to a superior principle which forced the American Christian to violate joyfully the monstrous law which enjoined him to aid the law officers to force back into bondage a poor fugitive slave."



have confounded them with the true witnesses for God, but in the end time has pronounced its unerring verdict. Let us, too, leave the issue to time."

There was more conviction and generous feeling in this spirited pamphlet than political prudence. The *Gazette* revenged itself by picking out some of Vinet's most daring utterances, accentuating them by criticism, and demanding that such doctrines should be repressed before they "made a breach in the bulwarks of our institutions and morals."

Vinet's answer was dated from Basle, and this time it was signed.

*New Observations on a new Article of the "Gazette."*

"1st April 1829.

"To condemn the proposition that 'it is better to obey God than man,' is tantamount to the admission that it is 'better to obey man than God.' It is to assert that all morality consists in obeying the Government, and that each Government as it comes into power votes a morality according to its taste, just as the Civil List is voted at the beginning of a reign. It is to affirm that there is no morality and no duty, and as men must be obeyed rather than God, *that there is no God.*"

But the menaces of the *Gazette* had already produced their effect. The judges were instructed to find the author, editor, and printer of Vinet's first pamphlet. It was discovered without difficulty that M. Monnard was implicated in the affair. He was one of the most distinguished members of the Liberal Party. The incessant war which he waged in the *Nouvelliste* against the majority of the Grand Council, an aristocratic coterie organized to reject all the liberal reforms reclaimed by an enlightened opinion, had rendered him odious to the dominant party. His political adversaries hoped to ruin

his influence by striking at him as the defender of the unpopular cause of religious liberty. They rejoiced to be able to fix him with the responsibility of being the editor of Vinet's pamphlet.

*To M. Monnard, 4th April 1829.*

"I rejoice," wrote Vinet, "to see champions more worthy than myself enter the list."

But if his modesty caused him to rejoice, he was, on the other hand, full of regret at having compromised his friend, and he took measures to turn the arrows of his adversaries against himself.

*To M. Monnard, 4th April 1829.*

"I have begun a pamphlet which will be short but I hope conclusive. . . . I work at it with delight. . . . There is only one thing that I have difficulty in accepting . . . noise . . . noise . . . noise.

"Yesterday I opened at random my New Testament, saying, Let me see whether I shall find some helpful word. The first verses I lighted on were,—

"'And when they bring you into the synagogues, and before magistrates and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer. . . . For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.'"

At last Vinet was brought to understand clearly the object his adversaries had in view; it was nothing less than the wish to ruin M. Monnard in the opinion of the public. His sorrow and regret knew no bounds.

"I do not believe I have ever experienced such anguish as that which now fills my heart to bursting. To think that *you* should be enveloped in the whirlwind which ought only to have touched me. O God, pardon me, and spare me the sorrow of doing harm to a generous friend."

The fault with which Vinet reproached himself with so much vehemence was in itself but venial. In his examination by the authorities he had said:—

“I expressed to M. Monnard my desire that the article should be printed in the form of a pamphlet at my expense.”

It was the execution of this friendly commission which political hatred chose to regard as a function of editorship, amenable to the tribunals; and before the tribunals had pronounced their judgment, the State Council took the extreme step of suspending M. Monnard from his functions as professor. The tribunal was enlightened enough to understand that written law could not prevail over moral law, and it declared that the pamphlet did not contain any provocation to revolt. In defence of the words: “*When a law obliges us to do that which conscience and the law of God condemn, it must be disobeyed,*” Vinet had declared that “the advent of Christianity was itself the occasion of a striking conflict between the holy authority of God and the pretensions of man. There was a time when the pure and simple profession of the gospel was of itself a resistance to human laws, and the followers of Christ in all ages have proclaimed the principle without which religion is not possible—that we must obey God rather than man.”

On the principal charge Vinet was thus fully exonerated, but he had erred in not submitting the article to the judgment of the Censor. The Court at once liberated M. Monnard, but imposed on Vinet a fine of 80 francs, with costs.

Such were the events which induced Vinet to publish his *Essay on the Conscience and on Religious Liberty*. In common with the most enlightened men of our century, Vinet desired that the spiritual should be

clearly distinguished from the temporal domain, and this as much in the interest of the State as in that of liberty and truth.

"I am told that by rejecting the idea that society ought to impose unity of worship, I have 'outraged religion.' But which religion? Is it that of Mahomet, forcing the people to submit to the Koran by the bloody argument of the sword? Is it that of Charlemagne, reddening with the blood of the Saxons the waters of their baptism? Is it that of Ivan the Terrible, turning the bed of a river into a vast baptistery, towards which the Siberians were forced in detachments at the bayonet's point? Is it that of the Count of Montfort, enlightening the Albigenses on the truths of Romanism by the glare of his blazing torches? Is it that of Louis XIV., sword in hand, declaring to a million of Protestants that there were no more Protestants in France? I own frankly that I have 'outraged' the religion of Mahomet, of Charlemagne, of Ivan the Terrible, of Louis XIV.; but if in speaking of outraging religion is meant the Christian religion, I contend that, on the contrary, I have rendered it a signal homage. . . . There is certainly one method of introducing a species of unity into religious questions. This method is the proscription of all light and of all knowledge. . . . Just as all colours, according to Bacon, harmonize in darkness; so all opinions are confounded and effaced in the extinction of human thought. Differences of opinion no longer exist, *because opinion itself has disappeared*. . . . There is no natural affinity between truth and force, any more than between water and fire. . . . To seek to create religious unity by means of force is no less impious than it is absurd. There is no such thing as a collective natural, official conscience. The conscience is always *individual*.

"Whatsoever may be the course adopted by the law, I desire that an authority which is higher than human law, namely, natural right, should decide this question. . . . I desire that Vaudois hearts may be struck with the cruel injustice of depriving a community of the worship in which it finds its consolation, its hopes, and the motives of its virtue.

I am averse to separation, yet I plead the cause of the separatists. I would even plead for Socinians, if their doctrine took root in our land. I plead with faith, for I know that this cause is nearing the hour of its triumph. In a few years liberty of worship will be secured for our canton. A thousand hearts thrill with joy at this sweet anticipation. Our Eternal Friend, whom we have seen on earth, and whom faith contemplates in heaven, has asked this victory of His Father. We shall obtain it: His cross is all-powerful—*Hoc signo vinces.*”

Vinet profited by the veil of anonymity in order to criticize his own work, in a pamphlet entitled *Observations on the Essay on Conscience and Religious Liberty*. He defines conscience as an inexplicable fact—the necessity of placing our actions in harmony with our persuasion. This “inexplicable sentiment” is the basis of morality, for without conscience there would be no “moral obligation.” Vinet presses St. Paul and J. J. Rousseau into the service, in order to show that everything dictated by this persuasion is a duty in the absolute and sovereign sense of the word. “Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind.” “All the morality of our actions resides in the judgment that we bring to bear on them.”

Just as everything that our conscience dictates is duty, so “everything that we are persuaded not to do is sin. We can sacrifice everything to society save conscience. The goods of the world belong to us, *but we belong to our conscience.*”

“My little pen-and-ink war,” wrote Vinet, “has done me no harm. Never did polemics infuse so little malice in the blood.” . . . Then he adds maliciously, “*Contempt has saved me from anger.*”

Vinet was not always so philosophical. Every now and then a note of deep sadness makes itself heard.

*To M. Forel, August 1829.*

"Certain opinions, to say nothing of interests, separate hearts with violence. . . . I have already lost friends who seemed as though they ought always to belong to me. . . . At present we are more estranged than if we had never been friends. I suffer, and I do not complain, *because it is just*. To love with all the heart, one must live the same life. In order to be friends, one must either have no principles whatsoever, or one must have them in common."

This new pamphlet appeared most opportunely, for the Council of State was taking its revenge upon the tribunals by the suspension of M. Monnard, while Vinet was himself inhibited from preaching for two years.

Marks of sympathy were not lacking to the two champions of truth and liberty. The University of Basle offered the Chair of Philosophy to M. Monnard, and the freedom of the city to Vinet. From all parts flowed letters of encouragement and congratulation. But Vinet's one longing was for peace.

*To Louis Leresche, 9th October 1829.*

"These combats are not meant for me. I sigh for silence. But to see daily the most sacred rights trampled under foot, and to hear oppression raised to the dignity of a theory, was a little too much for me. I know that I have closed against me the only door by which I could hope to re-enter my country. I am actually banished; but the world is large, and God is an asylum for all. Oh, abode of peace, which is in the bosom of God, receive the exile! From this high retreat how wretched are all these debates, and how pitiable is oppression! Struggle on!—God reigns, and His judgment awaits us."

## CHAPTER XI.

*Publication of "Chrestomathie"—Literary Criticism—Revolution of July 1830—Letters on Political Subjects.*

1830–1831.

THE anxiety occasioned by the Monnard trial, and the interruptions caused by illness, delayed the publication of Vinet's latest project, the *Chrestomathie*, which made its first appearance towards the close of the year 1829. In French Switzerland it was immediately appreciated as it deserved to be. It soon made its way into Germany and Protestant France, and later it was brilliantly introduced to the literary world by Sainte-Beuve.<sup>1</sup>

Vinet did not seek in literature merely the conventional beauties, — the grace and delicacy which charm

<sup>1</sup> Extract from *Portraits Contemporains*, de M. Sainte-Beuve, vol. ii. :—

"I have already called attention to the excellent little biographies and notices placed at the head of the extracts. But all these merits are to be found condensed, united, and enlarged in the *Review of the Principal Prose Writers and Poets*—a rich and finished work, a true literary *chef d'œuvre*. It is the most sustained, the most intense, and at the same time the most condensed piece of writing that I know. The style of Marc Joseph Chénier in his *Description of Literature* is equalled as regards clearness, and surpassed as regards novelty and depth of meaning. I only know the manner of Daunon in his *Eloge de Boileau*, which can be fitly compared with that of Monsieur Vinet. . . . His criticisms are as so many precious stones set in array. I cannot find one point to catch hold of. The whole is compact and harmonious."

The *Chrestomathie* has since been enriched by copious notes from the pen of Vinet's gifted countryman, Eugène Rambert.

the taste of refined and fastidious minds, but he recognised therein the grand voice of humanity renewing in each successive age its eternal plaint and its eternal aspiration. "He listened to the brilliant and melancholy prophecy, whereby man reveals himself to man in the voice of song. He caught its true signification, and he forced Python to render homage to the truth of Jesus Christ. It was thus that in his hands literary criticism became an apology for Christianity."<sup>1</sup>

Writing to thank M. Monnard for his interesting notice on Madame de Staël, Vinet adds,—

*To M. Monnard, 20th February 1828.*

"De Wette thinks that you lower the plane occupied by the fine arts. He attributes to them a great moral importance. . . . He is rather on the side of those moralists who have confounded the principle of the good and the beautiful. As I did not say 'Amen' to his remark a discussion ensued, when I should have liked you to have been in my place. He maintained that poets ought to devote themselves exclusively to the portrayal of virtue, and that it is in this way that they are moral. I opposed several illustrious examples to the contrary, and also the fact that one can be as dangerous in painting virtue as in depicting vice. I only ask of poets to be true, and to select with care, persuaded that in observing these rules they will be moral.

"What place, according to de Wette, ought we to assign to *Faust*, in which virtue occupies a very small place?"

A new study occupied Vinet's attention. He began to learn English, hoping to be able to read Erskine in the original. But his progress was slow, and he begged M. Forel to remind "a certain author dear to you (Mme. Forel) of her promise to translate Erskine's new work. It would be a real blessing to me and to many others."

<sup>1</sup> F. Chavannes.



He was attracted also by the theories of St. Simon and his adepts.

*To M. Ford, 1829.*

"They talk very prettily about hereditary right and property. I should like to know more about them. . . .

"I have undertaken the study of political economy. I hope that this science will render great moral services to the human race, independent of material utility."

"The course of public events induced Vinet to turn his attention more and more in the direction of practical politics. While feeling with enthusiasm all modern aspirations towards liberty, Vinet remained Christian and spiritual. He was not disposed to accept forms and institutions which were reputed liberal when the reality was wanting. He frankly accepted all liberal ideas, but he believed that they needed the influence of the gospel in order to become realities."<sup>1</sup>

"Switzerland, in order to be saved, needs two forms of courage. Military courage she already possesses; but a rarer form of courage—that of avowing her opinion, of professing her views, of declaring for a principle—she has yet to gain."

In the Canton of Vaud, the Constitution of 1815 tended towards the establishment of an oligarchy by the long duration of the magistrates and the complicated mode of election, which practically permitted the Grand Council to choose its own members. A large party demanded the abolition of the Constitution, which, elaborated and accepted in a moment of universal reaction, deprived the majority of the citizens of their electoral rights. The shock created by the fall of the Bourbons in the person of Charles X. gave an unexpected force to the Republican party.<sup>2</sup> The throne

<sup>1</sup> Astié.

<sup>2</sup> Charles X., who succeeded his brother, Louis XVIII., had sought to revive the ancient system of monarchy in France. On the 26th July 1830

that crumbled away in Paris on the 29th July 1830, caused all other thrones to tremble. In Germany liberal innovations were introduced; Italy was simmering; Spain was preparing a revolution; Belgium was on the point of separating itself from Holland; and England, thrilled by European events, was preparing the way for the Reform Bill.

The Revolution in France, which had for its basis the hatred of the institutions imposed in 1814, served as an incentive to the work begun in the Canton of Vaud. Petitions flowed in from all parts of the canton, and the Grand Council was convoked for an extraordinary sitting. Bands of peasants, summoned by fires lighted on the heights, assembled on the Place du Château. At noon the Grand Hall was invaded by crowds bearing staves, and numerous scenes of disorder took place. Under this pressure the Council decided on the nomination of a Constituent Assembly, and declared itself "provisional," which was tantamount to an abdication. M. Monnard announced from the top of a ladder these resolutions to the masses, who dispersed peaceably, well satisfied with the result of their little revolution.

Vinet watched the course of affairs with deep anxiety.

*To M. Grandpierre, 11th August 1830.*

"Since my last letter events have marched with giant strides. A few days have performed the work of centuries. I have heard one from whom I did not expect such opinions, declare that 'the hand of Providence was there.' . . . If God does not withhold His protection, this event will be the greatest of the century. It is not the reversal appeared the famous Ordinances, which suppressed the liberty of the press, and created a new system of elections. Paris replied to this severe provocation by the three memorable days of 27th, 28th, and 29th July 1830. In spite of the determined gallantry of the Guard, Charles X. was banished, and the Chamber raised Louis Philippe, Duke of Orleans, to the throne.

of a dynasty, it is the opening of a new era. I believe that the men who aid are not as great as the measures they enforce, and that they are performing unconsciously the will of Another. After the first impetus given to the masses, I do not find a mind proportionate to the situation, much less proportionate to the future, which this present situation involves. . . . Decisions are dictated by an invisible force. One does not press forward ; one receives the impulse. One does not make a revolution ; one accepts it. . . . I own that the petulance of certain ambitions has alarmed me. I shuddered to hear declamations against feudal aristocracy. I should like its continuation if only to counterbalance the industrial aristocracy, which increases with rapidity, and which is far more one-sided (*einseitig*) than any other form of aristocracy whatsoever. Of this I am fully persuaded. . . . Deprived of the moderating influence which characterizes the peerage, one will have nothing in the future but the despotism of a Chamber or the despotism of an individual." . . .

Vinet returns to the subject in a letter addressed to M. Grandpierre :—

*To M. Grandpierre, 14th September 1830.*

"Where is your proof that the peerage must necessarily degenerate? In the case of Peers who have no successors, the Chamber recruits itself with new celebrities. It stands to reason that hereditary Peers will seek to resemble their forefathers, and thus give to their dignity a second legitimation. . . . Hitherto they have only cultivated military virtues, and these have flourished among them. When the honour of the aristocracy finds its field in civil virtues, I believe that we shall see the same result. (Of course you understand that I am not talking of Christian virtues.)" . . .

As time wore on, the admiration which Vinet had at first conceived for the July Revolution began to cool.

"If certain things continue, I shall end by admiring nothing but Providence, which is certainly the surest

object of admiration! . . . The Orleanist Revolution will always be finer than the Orange usurpation. But how soon man wearies of being great! . . . Liberty—absent, desired, pursued—has an ideal character which renders it fit to be an object of veneration. But when firmly established and tranquilly possessed, it is no longer the same thing; and the need of the infinite, which is part of man's nature, must take its true direction. . . . I love in such a moment as this to read the Prophets. They cast our thoughts towards a glorious future which man will not snatch from us."

Basle was not exempted from the political agitation which convulsed the rest of Switzerland. As has been well said by M. Rambert: "The tempests which take place in tea-cups are the only ones which penetrate to the depths and stir the entire mass."

In Basle the question at issue was the admission of country voters to a full share of the electoral rights which had hitherto been absorbed by the city.

*To M. Monnard, 30th October 1830.*

"I am fain to own," wrote Vinet, "that circumstance often places obstacles in the way of the full and frank application of principles. One is in danger of forgetting that progress is only *one* of the elements of civilisation and of national happiness, and that vessels without ballast advance quickly, but founder with still greater rapidity. . . . The epoch is prodigiously critical. The historic bond which unites the present to the past seems on the point of rupture. Dare I own that I, whom no logical theory can affright, am afraid of the ravages which theories may make until they themselves form part of history, and possess antecedents and memories? The tyranny of princes is terrible. Is there nothing to fear from the tyranny of opinion?"

It was rumoured that the peasants were coming *en masse* to claim their rights; the town was put in a state of defence, and a week of painful anxiety ensued.

*To M. Grandpierre.*

"Thank God, the danger is past!" wrote Vinet. "We should have felt less alarm if we had realized the small amount of force, of union, and of resolution our enemies possessed. . . . Every one took up arms, even children. I, who write to you, I seized musket and cartridges. I answered the call of the tocsin. I mounted guard. And all this without enthusiasm or heroism, but with the sentiment of a father of a family who protects his hearth, and of a citizen who defends the town where he has spent fourteen happy years. A few sorties, a few cannon-shot sufficed to clear the environs of the town. Our assailants were scattered to the winds, leaving some wounded and several prisoners in our hands. The loyal but timid districts hold up their heads and declare themselves on the side of order."

Vinet knew full well that the country was incapable of furnishing two-thirds of the national representation, and that the clamour for equal electoral rights only represented the wish of "a factious minority, led by a handful of good-for-nothing men."

The advocates of an educational test will appreciate the following:—

"Shall I confess (but this is strictly *entre nous*) that I should like by some means to assure to enlightened men better chances than to the ignorant?"

Rumours of war oppressed Vinet's heart. Humanity appears to him to be "stupid and hideous," because some personal ambition can at any moment precipitate it on the battle-field. "Oh, admirers of the human kind," cries Vinet, "come and see!" On the other hand, he realizes that Providence can reduce all to order, and this consciousness "gives him quiet sleep."

*To M. Alexis Forel, 18th December 1830.*

"That which is taking place in the Canton of Vaud fills

my thoughts and agitates my heart. I believe that my dear country is on the eve of a true political regeneration. As we have a new Constitution, would it not be possible to ensure the principle of liberty of conscience? Would it not be well to insert after Art. 36: 'No person shall be disturbed on account of his religious opinions, or in the exercise of his worship, as long as he does not violate any recognised rights'?"

Although Vinet rejoiced that Europe should be about to learn the meaning of liberty, he rejoiced with trembling. He believed that liberty would be a source of trouble to a people who did not offer it to God. It was the absence of the religious spirit which made him tremble.

*To M. Monnard, 2nd April 1831.*

"I endorse all that you say respecting the irreligious darkness of French politics. A whole generation changes its destiny without invoking the name of God. . . . We are far behind our heathen ancestors. These pagans were more religious than we are."

*To M. Charité, December 1830.*

"It (*i.e.* the system of St. Simon) is not full of life as is this old Christianity to which the 'Globists'<sup>1</sup> have just given its dismissal. Of how many religious systems has not this ancient worship celebrated the funeral! and how puerile are all these parodies and imitations! Does one believe Christianity to be dead because M. de Lamennais is at bay? What do you think of this sudden conversion of an Ultramontane to the principles of liberty of conscience? He preaches to the deaf. *Roman Catholicism needs a new order of clergy, and then we might see wonders.*"

Vinet followed with keen interest the progress of the Committee charged to present the project of a new Constitution to the Canton of Vaud.

<sup>1</sup> The *Globe* newspaper.

*To M. A. Forel, 4th April 1831.*

"It is a fine scheme," he wrote, "but I cannot help thinking that those who frame it submit too readily to the ideas of the day. . . . I see many sage precautions against power: none against liberty. I own that all this gives me some uneasiness. Present circumstances have made people forget that power is one of the elements of social order. Another thing that they have forgotten is—the corruption of the human heart. Our Constitutions scatter political rights broadcast, as though they were dealing with angels; and, strange to say, the more those at the head of affairs are honest and disinterested, the more inevitable is their error. Such men readily believe that others share their own rectitude and delicacy of conscience. I believe those who understand these things would find no difficulty in proving that political organization is not so much the end as the means—the means of protecting the rights of all, and of facilitating the perfectionment of the human race. In conformity with this principle, political power beginning with the franchise should be confided to the most worthy, the most capable, and the best placed for its exercise. . . . That which puts a bridle to my hopes and sympathies for the enfranchisement of the people, is the absence of the religious element. As long as this is lacking, nations will torment themselves in vain."

In Basle the struggle between city and country continued, and much bitterness of feeling was provoked on either side. The Government of Basle charged Vinet with a diplomatic mission to Lausanne in order to explain the situation of affairs and refute calumnies. But the division between the two populations was too deep to admit of reconciliation, and, weary of this continued strife, the Diet pronounced the separation of the canton into two parts.

*To M. Monnard, October 1832.*

"You know that I have made my profession of faith at the Diet in an unmistakable fashion?"

"You imagined, perhaps, that in pronouncing the word *aristocracy*, I meant the ambition of place. Not at all: I meant the aristocracy of money—the inflexible pride and the hardness which result from the sense of the superiority of wealth. This is the cause of the unfortunate division of Basle into two populations."

The last two years had brought to Vinet much bitter experience of the selfishness of man. While ready to "adore results" as the work of God, he felt profoundly disgusted at the principles, the means, the agents, by which they were obtained.

*To M. Scholl, Pastor in London, 28th September 1831.*

"Selfishness is everywhere, because incredulity is everywhere," wrote Vinet. "Is it the same in England? Have you not there a background of belief and of piety which will save you? Have you not taught the mass to accept a better Reform Bill than that which has just been adopted by Parliament—a perfect bill, which does not need to be altered from session to session? God grant that it may be accepted everywhere. It is the sole hope of society—sick unto death."



## CHAPTER XII.

*"Some Ideas on Religious Liberty"—Opinion on Dissenters  
—Respect for Antiquity—State of Europe—Religion  
and Politics.*

1831.

A NEW era had dawned for the Vaudois people. It began—as do all new eras—by exciting many hopes, and fostering many illusions.

"We are now given over to liberty," wrote Vinet in the *Nouvelliste Vaudois*. "By this fact we are brought face to face with either a great privilege or a great danger. Your liberty (do not forget this fact) will be worth just that which you are worth yourselves."

Foremost among the questions which the new Assembly (called into existence by the Revolution) was invited to solve, came the question of religious liberty. The clergy, unanimous on the subject of the maintenance of the National Church, were divided on that of liberty of worship.

The friends of Vinet turned their eyes in the direction of Basle, hoping for some vigorous article from his pen. They had not long to wait. In February appeared a pamphlet, entitled *Some Ideas on Religious Liberty*. According to Vinet, religious liberty was not merely a right, but an imperious necessity of our human nature.

"February 1831.

"Conscience is opinion reinforced by the sentiment of obligation. He who will weigh these two elements when united, will learn that nothing in the world will out-balance them. . . . Nothing can endure but that which rests on the immutable basis of reason, right, and nature. The exercise of all other virtues is a simple right, but the exercise of religious liberty has the character of a duty. The object of all other rights is more or less outside of ourselves. They are our goods, our means of existence, and, in certain cases, our life. But the object of this right is the most intimate part of our being, God Himself manifesting Himself in us. When such a right is violated, what else would be sacred? Who would respect my dwelling after having violated the sanctuary of my soul? Who would keep his hand from my goods after having laid it on my most precious treasure? Who would leave me master of my opinions after forbidding me to obey my conscience? . . . Without Liberty there can be no security. She is the sign of all true progress. She indicates the highest degree of civilisation, and the triumph of moral ideas."

After having recalled the fact that the liberty of the press had been established by law, Vinet declared that—

"one must hold fast by this law, or else make another in favour of religious liberty. For how would it be possible to refuse to *conscience* that which we have accorded to *opinion*?"

It is interesting to note that a pamphlet from the pen of the Doyen Curtat appeared at the same time, in which he stated his conviction that the independence of the Church would result in the destruction of religion, in civil war, and in national ruin.

"Obedient to the voice of conscience, the Doyen Curtat showed himself full of intolerance; while Vinet, following the same internal guide, established the principle of

religious liberty, and inspired the ever-growing army of its devoted adherents. Vinet obeyed without hesitation the promptings of his conscience, and followed them to their logical end.

"If he succeeded in finding a firm standing-ground, as his venerable master the Doyen Curtat had done, it was on the *other side of the torrent*. Destined to meet with joy in the heavenly mansions, an abyss separated them for the rest of their terrestrial pilgrimage."<sup>1 2</sup>

Vinet took care to distinguish between the cause he pleaded and that of the "Dissenters." He even went the length of showing the advantage they had gained from persecution.

"Because they suffer with courage, many think that they suffer for the cause of truth.

"Doubtless they had truth and reason on their side, but they thought that they possessed more than their share. Had they been left in peace, they would have been judged with fewer prepossessions in their favour.

"Their position would not have added sanction to their doctrine. They would have been treated dispassionately, and probably that which was anti-scriptural, narrow, arbitrary, and exclusive, and put them out of touch with the law of progress in the human mind and with some of the principles of human nature, would have been confined within yet stricter limits."

Vinet was called on to pay dearly for this plain speaking. Yet these strictures only afforded further proof—if proof were needed—of his sincerity. In his preceding articles, written in anticipation of popular violence, he had had good reason for regarding the persecuted Christians as victims of a grievous intolerance.

<sup>1</sup> F. Chavannes.

<sup>2</sup> In a letter to M. Monnard (1881) we find the following malicious sentence: "Pardon me, M. Curtat, I said *MY DOCTRINES*, in the plural!"

But on one important point his sentiments had not changed. He had less sympathy than ever with the spirit of contention and indiscreet zeal. One passage will suffice.

*To M. Forel, July.*

"With regard to Christianity, we have men here who undertake to discredit it. It is a branch of the great tree of César Malan, grafted after the fashion of mistletoe on our Church of Basle by a disciple of the *Pré Beni*.<sup>1</sup> I have had the opportunity of watching the proceedings of these ladies and gentlemen, and I ask myself if the Macbriars and Balfours of Walter Scott were not more reasonable! These people, with their little views and their big words, with the thunder of their anathemas and the platitude of their plottings, have the appearance of children who play at religion. It would be well if they were only ridiculous, but it is much worse in reality. Oh, if persecution were not so near, and not so easy to kindle, I should long for a good '*Provinciale*'<sup>2</sup> directed against these cold fanatics! You are astonished that I, their defender, should speak of them in this way? I would defend them again, but that which I have lately seen stirs all the moral sentiment I possess. . . . After all, they are not all alike, and I know elsewhere some who are worthy of respect."

Vinet approached with delicacy the subject of the separation of Church and State. It was still a far-off ideal, and he did not wish to realize it at the expense of any particular Church.

He still clung with all the tender fibres of old association to the National Church in which he had been bred.

*Letter to the "Nouvelliste."*

"I am not a stranger to the sentiment which attaches one to the past, and to this respect for ancient institutions which is akin to respect for age. . . . I would almost reproach myself as much to be wanting in respect for an

<sup>1</sup> The residence of C. Malan.

<sup>2</sup> Allusion to the *Lettres Provinciales*.

*old thing* as for an *old man*. . . . The age of our Church recommends it: its origin still more so. . . . But I love in her more that which she might become than that which she has been. . . . I see in her one of the manifestations of the invisible Church. I love in her that which our fathers have loved: an asylum for souls that are weary and heavy laden, a hostelry for travellers on the way to eternity, a link cast by the hand of my Lord between heaven and earth: I love in her something more ancient than all my past—something which she still possesses of the Church of Christ—or rather, it is the Church of Christ which I love in her.”

The most remarkable of the articles written by Vinet during this period took the form of a letter on the subject of the attitude of the pastors, of whom a great number separated the cause of the national Church from that of liberty.

“How can religious liberty be called in question by Christians? How can those who profess to be saved by faith talk of constraint and restriction? How can the disciples of one whose reign is not of this world consent to the dominion by earthly powers of the inheritance of the Lord?

“Take with you this thought to Mount Sinai shrouded in the thunders of the Law, or to Calvary encircled by miracles of love. Take it from the height of heaven to the foot of the Cross: raise yourself so high that all the vain obstacles of carnal wisdom and of earthly politics are lost in the immensities of the other world. Meditate on liberty of worship on your knees before the Cross of the God-man; plunge yourselves in His atmosphere of the Infinite, the Divine, and the Eternal; fill yourself with thoughts of death and of immortality, and then come if you can to oppose to us your frail objections, your petty measures, and your dwarfed wisdom. Try to enchain the conscience of the people with your puny bonds, and point out a narrow entrance for the chariot of fire whose pathway leads to the heavens. . . . Separation

is nothing at present," he wrote; "but if this ancient slavery of the Church continues, another kind of dissent is preparing itself, a large, liberal, *perhaps national* dissent. It is necessary that the Church should be free, and it shall be free. . . . We will advance: we must. *By liberty to unity.* Such will be the device of Christianity."

But all this eloquence was of no avail. The Assembly rejected by a large majority the amendment which sought to establish liberty of worship.

The discouragement felt by Vinet is discernible in his letters. Everywhere the outlook seemed dark and sad.

*To M. Charité, October 1831.*

"The state of Europe appears extremely serious. Public questions have reached a height which puts them in contact with metaphysics and religion. There is no institution, old or new, whereon the faith of nations and of individuals can rest. Everything is argued about, discussed, and judged. A king is an idea; a form of government is an idea: nothing is real, nothing is necessary, nothing is loved. . . . As political faith will not be revived for a long time, and as, meanwhile, something must be believed,—as all external force is vain without moral force, and as all moral force is based on faith,—it follows that if the French people wish to be guaranteed against the dangers of political incredulity, it must cast itself in the arms of religious faith. . . .

"Your St. Simonians have realized that we cannot dispense with worship. But their system of religion and of morality is hollow and empty. . . . There is not enough in it to deceive a child, yet I cannot too much admire their assurance when they speak of God, who is only for them the *Great All*, the mass of beings, the ocean of existences, and in whose bosom will be lost (without consciousness or remembrance) all men—the St. Simonians with the rest. It is true that, having bequeathed their personality to humanity, they have the immense consolation of knowing that humanity does not die, and that

their personality is preserved with it, while on their side they are as if they had never existed! . . . How delightful to pass from these cloudy metaphysics to the elevated and noble system of Royer Collard!"

It will not be out of place to close this account of the Revolution—in which we have seen Vinet under so many different lights (sometimes taking the musket, sometimes trying his hand at diplomatic negotiations, and sometimes fighting with the more familiar weapons of pen and ink)—by the insertion of a letter in which he develops his manner of considering the relations that exist between religion and patriotism.

Madame Jaquet Forel had asked his opinion of a definition of patriotism given by an English writer,—“Something which commands us to oppress other countries in order to augment the imaginary happiness of our own.”

Vinet began his reply by setting aside that spurious form of patriotism which is only pride in disguise.

*To Mme. Forel, 5th August 1831.*

“Patriotism has always been a favourite virtue of the human race. It is certainly that of our epoch: it has even become its religion, and as religion it has naturally its ‘tartuffes’ (hypocrites). They are of the kind Molière would paint, if Molière were of our time. The day is not far off when this kind of hypocrisy will not be less odious to the masses than was the religious hypocrisy of the epoch of Louis XIV.”

Then, leaving abuses and make-believes on one side, Vinet goes on to say,—

“Let us recognise patriotism to be one of the natural affections which precede Christianity, and without which one could not be Christian. St. Paul ranks among those who dishonour the Christian profession men who are with-

out 'natural affection.' These affections become virtues when in action, and Christian virtues when penetrated by divine charity. It is not necessary for a man to be Christian in order to love his father, his wife, his children, his country; but under the influence of Christianity these affections receive a new character. The supernatural is joined to the natural affection. One no longer loves his children and his country by instinct and by inclination—one loves them in God. These individual sentiments increase in energy and in purity. One loves more, and one loves better. . . .

"The compilers of catechisms can make long catalogues of duties and of virtues; but, *au fond*, Christian virtue is one.<sup>1</sup> It is a general disposition, a life that animates all life. It is a first notion from which flows spontaneously all the rest. . . . Christian morality is the acquisition of a new heart which knows and loves God. . . . True morality, in its bearing and in its application, is to be found in the gift of a new heart. And true patriotism is only one of the manifestations of this moral principle deposited by Christ in the heart.

"The Christian loves *christianly* all that it is natural to man to love. The Christian serves *christianly* his country, towards which he has natural duties. He can, he must be a patriot. I believe that he alone is a true patriot, whether he serves his country indirectly by his private virtues, or directly in the service of war or of peace. He prefers his fatherland to other countries; but his affection is not a narrow exclusiveness, and if he had to choose between his country and humanity, he would certainly choose *humanity*. . . . Many have asserted that the Christian ought not to busy himself with public affairs. I know of nothing in the gospel to support this opinion. If it is generally adopted, one must renounce all hope of seeing the Christian in the Administration; and the same point of view would remove Christians from the careers of industry, of commerce, and of art. One does not seize at a glance

<sup>1</sup> We are reminded of a passage which occurs in Dr. Martineau's sermon on "Martha and Mary" (*Hours of Thought*): "Life is not a succession of businesses; it is the flow of one spirit."



all the consequences of this system which would practically result in the degradation of all Christian persons."

A year later Vinet wrote :—

" 13th March 1832.

"I am still bound to the cause of liberty. I love equality in so far as it may be conciliated with the interests of liberty and of civilisation. I think that the world gravitates towards equality, but I think it impossible for the moment.

"As to the sovereignty of the people as it is understood and preached in our cantons, I am altogether incredulous!"

CHAPTER XIII.<sup>1</sup>

*Calls to Montauban—Paris—Geneva—Articles in "Le Semeur."*

1830—1831.

THE publication of the *Essay on Liberty of Worship* and of the *Chrestomathie* had brought Vinet's name before the notice of the public, and people began to express surprise that so gifted a writer should be condemned to the routine of elementary teaching.

The first attempts to draw him from obscurity came from France. He was invited to compete for the chair of Ethics at the Theological Faculty of Montauban, and at the same time others urged him to establish himself in Paris in order to take part in the work of evangelization. Both these offers were declined.

*To M. Grandpierre, March 1830.*

"You make a great mistake when you speak of my playing a rôle in the great theatre of Paris. My feeble character could not stand the shock of opinions and of ideas. Solitude alone can give me force. But if anything of moment takes place in Paris, let me share it. Tell me on what side my poor meditations can turn with most advantage."

Later, Vinet was invited to compete for the chair of Latin Literature then vacant at the Academy of Lausanne.

<sup>1</sup> A. Vinet, by E. Rambert.

He again refused the offer, and this time on the ground that he was incapable of filling it properly.

At Basle, where there were already two French pastors, a third pulpit was offered to Vinet.

*To Louis Leresché.*

"I cannot help telling you of a proposition which has just been made to me. I have preached once or twice this winter, and this has resulted in the offer of a pulpit from the Consistory of the French Church. . . . These gentlemen see that the *Mummers* hear me with pleasure, and that others like my style of preaching. They hope that I may be able to repeople their church, and at all events they need an assistant. This is a matter for reflection and for prayer. I have not yet sent my reply. I said to one of these gentlemen, 'Whence comes it that I cannot succeed in shocking my hearers?' (For I have said things that were not well received from my predecessor.) It was explained that I spared them the kind of classification that causes displeasure. I think also that my habit of addressing myself to reason is one of the points that gives satisfaction. Nevertheless, I do not think that my preaching is suited to the conversion of souls."

Finally, Vinet refused the post.

In the following year came a call from Geneva, which was passing through an ecclesiastical crisis. We have already seen that the venerable company of pastors was accused of substituting the unitarian heresy for the dogmatic teaching of Christianity. Towards 1831 the struggle between the preachers of the revival and the pastors of the old school became more marked. An Evangelical Society was founded, and a regular service was organized. Furthermore, the society announced the intention of establishing a school of theology. The promoters of this enterprise repudiated all idea of dissent.

But the "venerable company" could not view with

an indifferent eye the foundation of a Faculty in opposition to the existing school. The consequence was that the three pastors<sup>1</sup> who were at the head of the movement were inhibited from preaching in the canton.

This event gave rise to an ardent controversy in which Vinet took an active part. He endeavoured to show that "as the Church of Geneva plumed itself on the fact that it was not tied down to a Confession of Faith, it was therefore bound to leave its pulpit open to the proclamation of all shades of doctrine, without distinction or exception."

The Evangelical Society of Geneva invited Vinet to occupy one of the chairs of its new Faculty.

*To M. Merle, 23rd July 1831.*

"Never," wrote Vinet, "did it enter my head that I should be called to co-operate in your labours.

"Your letter has only made me realize my incapacity more keenly. You need for this struggle men who are strong, who are well prepared, who unite culture with character. You need theologians and well-armed scholars, who will suffice not only for a recognised sphere, but for needs and for circumstances which cannot be foreseen. . . . I am not one of these. My intellectual as well as my physical powers are below these conditions. Above all, you need men of faith—mature Christians. . . . Oh, seek them elsewhere! He whom you call to your holy war does not walk firmly, he only *totters*; does not speak, he only *lisps*; does not will vigorously, he only *wishes*.

"It is painful to him thus to expose his weakness to your gaze, but do you wish that in a work where decision, energy, and an appearance of frankness are essential to success, he should hinder you by his weakness and slowness, or that in order to appear at one with you, he should adopt a language which would not be the faithful expression of his inner life? Do not mix this insipid water with your generous wine. . . . I can only be known to

<sup>1</sup> MM. Gaussen, Galland et Merle.

you by my writings. Have I been guilty of making use of expressions which exaggerate the depth of my knowledge and of my religious life? Hardly, for one of your colleagues—M. Malan—wrote to me last year with much gentleness and affection, that he inferred from my writings that I was a ‘stranger to the spirit of adoption.’ . . . You will be able to judge better if you will read the sermons I am now printing. You will recognise one who mounts with the crowd the steps of the temple, turning to invite those who linger to follow, and knowing nothing of the sanctuary save a little of the light and of the perfume which the open door had permitted to escape.”<sup>1</sup>

“The tone of humility is perhaps exaggerated, but the letter is most valuable as an indication that at this period Vinet acknowledged that he could not adopt the language of the Genevan revival.”<sup>2</sup>

A more congenial sphere of work soon presented itself. In September a weekly journal, entitled *Le Semeur*, was founded in Paris. Its mission was to approach political, literary, and philosophical subjects in a Christian spirit.

*To M. Scholl, 28th September 1831.*

“I rejoice with you at the appearance of *Le Semeur*. It is a beautiful idea to endeavour to show how Christianity turns to account the different spheres of human thought. It gives to religion the right of citizenship in the domain of science and art. . . . People will see that one can be both Christian and man. . . . I have been asked to contribute some articles to this journal. I am trying to comply, but with an ever-increasing senti-

<sup>1</sup> When this letter was read for the first time by M. E. Scherer, he expressed his astonishment that Vinet should have ventured to push irony beyond the permitted limits. But those who knew him intimately assure us that we must only see in it the sincere expression of a deeply humble nature.

<sup>2</sup> Astié.

ment of incapacity. Alas! I sow little. From time to time I gather some dry leaves."

In spite of this modest estimate of his merits, Vinet soon became the life and soul of the journal. In the world of letters it was guessed at once that none other than Vinet could be the author of some remarkable studies on "Utilitarianism," on the *Feuilles d'automne* of Victor Hugo, and the *Volupté* of Sainte-Beuve.

In the essay on "Utilitarianism" Vinet endeavours to show that it was during an epoch of moral exhaustion that Cicero tried to reconcile the Roman public to duty by the consideration of utility.

Again, it was during a period of social putrefaction that Helvetius conferred on selfishness the empire of moral determination. According to this theory, the virtuous man is he who best understands his own interest. Morality thus becomes the arithmetic of happiness.

Vinet goes on to show that if personal interest is the basis of action, those who substitute for it general utility are false to their principle.

... "The useful and the right are too distinct to be confounded. Neither enthusiasm nor moral independence can be awakened by mere utility. . . . Between a parricide and a devoted son there is no distinction, save that one understands *his interest better than the other*. . . . Gratitude is abolished the moment that one cannot believe a man to be influenced by other than interested motives. Under such a system self-sacrifice is impossible, for how can you persuade an individual so trained that the *general* interest demands the sacrifice of his particular interest? Or how can he keep before his eyes all the general consequences which may ensue from some particular action, for instance, from a hasty word? . . . If there be such things as duty and conscience, empire belongs to them. There is between the right and the useful the same difference that there is between a law and a fact. The useful is as subordinate

to the right as facts are to ideas. Right is the motive of existence;—utility is the condition. The right is God in us;—the useful is the ‘ego’ in each of us. These opposing principles are united in the love of God, which unites duty and felicity.”

In the article on “Voluptuousness” Vinet asserts that—

“the moral sense of the age is not sufficiently on its guard against this particular form of sin. There are so many degrees between ‘its gracious dawn and its lurid setting’ that one is tempted to imagine the two have nothing in common. But this ingenuous distinction is only turned to the profit of one sex. The other is treated with uniform severity. The dawn and the setting are confounded—usage is confounded with excess; accident with habit. On the one hand, social interest reveals and *sharpens* the truth; but, on the other, it slumbers. . . . Those who penetrate below the surface of society cannot bring themselves to speak lightly of these sins. They are destructive alike to the family and to the State. For the State is based on justice, and voluptuousness is a cruel injustice, for it engages in a combat which is both unequal and cowardly; the aggressor risks comparatively nothing, and the victim risks *all*.

“It is a flagrant injustice to render one sex more responsible than the other for a common fault. The social state of a country is always exactly in proportion to the purity of its morals. Impurity is at the root of all disorderly vices. It is the source of crime;—it is the victory of the grosser side of our nature and the defeat of the soul. Conversion becomes well-nigh impossible, for there is no longer a spiritual being to influence; the soul is swallowed up in the flesh. What stronger reproach can be made to the voluptuary than the simple enunciation of the fact that the human body was destined to be the temple of the Holy Ghost?”

In the article on the *Feuilles d'automne* Vinet ridicules the criticism which announced that “literary anarchy”

was imminent, because a style unknown to Corneille and Racine,—

“the drama, had taken its place between tragedy and comedy, and had given a freer and simpler representation of all the phases of human life.

“The fine arts, and especially poetry, are the voice of humanity, the expression, under changing forms, of that which is unchangeable, and which is common to all. It is because the poet knows how to touch the invisible lyre which vibrates in all human souls that he is recognised as such by his fellows. In the poet and the artist humanity only seeks an organ of expression, an echo of its speech, the impress of its personality. Humanity, which never dies, aspires to the truth, which is immortal. It is *by the heart*, not by the mind, that all the nations are citizens, and all the ages are contemporaneous. It is *by the heart* that the identity of human nature is ascertained. It is from the heart that proceed the thoughts which unite varying personalities. The mind is too apt to create divisions.”

Vinet complains of the—

“lack of faith revealed by modern criticism. People do not dispute about forms and means when the source is pure and abundant. They create spontaneously. Sterility in poetry proceeds as much from the absence of a common faith, as from the insufficiency of individual capacity.”

Vinet severely condemns all poetry which addresses itself exclusively to the senses. “The best representatives of modern poetry are those who sigh and who wait.” . . . Victor Hugo is one of those “who mount by the ladder of poetry towards ancient worship and ancient religious traditions.” . . .

Vinet believes in the real inspiration of the poet.

“*He listens*, he does not force his mind to utter what he does not know : *he listens and waits.*”



Sainte-Beuve was one of the first to remark these articles.

“I have to thank the author of a criticism on *Volupté* for the Christian counsels and the moral point of view which dominated his judgment. . . . I have felt how much remains to be done in the future in order not to be unworthy of such criticism, which honours even less than it touches the heart of the writer, and provokes serious reflection.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

*Publication of "Discourses on Religious Subjects"—  
Abstract of Sermons.*

1830-1831.

THE *Semeur* did not absorb the whole of Vinet's literary activity. In the year 1830 he published two sermons on the "Tolerance" and on the "Intolerance" of the gospel, preceding them by a short preface.

"Persons advanced in Christian knowledge and in piety will find little nourishment in these discourses. . . . We have constrained our words to remain within the limits of our personal feeling and experience . . . an artificial enthusiasm will not convey a blessing."<sup>1</sup>

The sermons reflect Vinet's preoccupations at this period. It had been decided at the opening of the Grand Council that a retrospect of the public administration of the Canton of Vaud, from 1803 to 1831, should be drawn up by the secretary and sent to each pastor, with orders that it should be read from the pulpit on the following Sunday, and that, if possible, sermons should be preached on the subject. This intimation fell

<sup>1</sup> See *Reality, Candour, and Courage*, by J. F. Astié, 1888. "Preach what you believe, and what you have experienced, rather than what is expected of you. . . . The great danger which the preacher has to face is the temptation to go beyond the measure of the truth which he has received."

like a thunderbolt on the clergy. Many of the pastors in isolated cures, unable to confer with their brethren before the appointed Sunday, were perplexed how they ought to act; and many a harassed ecclesiastic must have ardently longed to see the day when he should be left to the peaceful exercise of his spiritual functions, and no longer called upon to perform the office of the public crier.

Vinet felt that it was necessary to stigmatize the spirit of persecution as well as the narrowness of certain Christians. It was necessary to show the true character of the largeness of the gospel as well as the nullity of civil authority in matters of religion. These were the subjects treated in the two sermons.

In the following year Vinet published a volume, entitled *Discours sur quelques sujets religieux*. The inscription borrowed from Pascal is significant.

"Those to whom God has given religion by the sentiment of the heart are truly happy. But to others we can only present it by reasoning, while waiting till God Himself shall imprint it on the heart."

"We should here recall," says M. Astié, "the letter addressed to M. Monnard in which the young man of twenty-one expressly declared that religious truth appealed to the heart and the conscience, and that reason could neither support nor upset it."

"That which the young man declared impracticable, the man of ripe age undertook to perform, and, strange to say, it was the young man who was in the right."

In the "Preliminary reflections" of the first edition, Vinet condemns Reason to an exclusively formal rôle. "She is the servant guiding the soul to the door of the sanctuary, but not venturing to enter in."

In the fourteen sermons which compose the first volume, Vinet endeavours to show how much wisdom

there is in the "folly of the cross," and how far its mysteries which surpass our reason are in conformity with the great mystery before our eyes in all ages—the mystery of human nature.

"The point of departure of all science is mystery. Every system begins by an article of faith. Here the position of the philosopher and that of the Christian are identical. Both are incapable of proving their premisses. . . . As the philosopher does not admit any revelation save that of reason, he falls back on *à priori* arguments which we have recognised to be impossible. The Christian, on his side, invokes a positive revelation, and here begins for him the rôle of reason."

The impression produced by these discourses<sup>1</sup> was prompt and durable. Marks of sympathy and of admiration flowed from all quarters.

"Nothing is lacking to complete his triumph—not even the slave following the chariot, who appeared under the form of a pious brother. 'I know that you receive praises from all sides. May God preserve you from the swellings of pride. . . . It is likely that from time to time, and perhaps often, you may be conscious of self-satisfaction. As your friend and brother, I think it right to say—Take

<sup>1</sup> Contents :—

- I. The Religions of Man and the Religion of God.
- II. The Mysteries of Christianity.
- III. The Gospel understood by the Heart.
- IV. A Proof of Christianity.
- V. Faith.
- VI. The Atheism of the Ephesians.
- VII. Grace and Law.
- VIII. On the Principle of Christian Morality.
- IX. The Christian in Active Life.
- X. On the seeking of Human Glory.
- XI. The feeble Members of the Church.
- XII. The Entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem.
- XIII. The Consolations of Christ.
- XIV. Favourite Idols.

care. What do you possess that you have not already received?"<sup>1</sup>

Hardly any of the letters of congratulation that Vinet received at this period have been preserved; but he kept religiously the letter of the unknown Mentor, which was destined apparently to play the rôle of the amulet of Pascal.

The publication of the *Discours* enables us to mark the point reached by Vinet in the year 1831. The means by which men are to be convinced of the truth of Christianity are those advanced by the ordinary apologists of the school of Paley.

"Some will be brought to Christianity by historical arguments: they will prove the truth of the Bible as we prove the truth of all history; they will assure themselves that the books which compose it are really written by the authors indicated. They will confront the prophecies contained in these ancient documents with the events which took place ten centuries later. They will assure themselves of the reality of the miraculous facts recounted in the book, and will conclude that the intervention of the divine power which alone could dispose the forces of nature was necessary," etc.

"To sum up this exhortation in a word, one must be in a position to solve, each for himself, the interminable questions raised by criticism on the various books of the Old and New Testaments.

"What becomes of faith in this system which teaches that the religions of the world and the religion of Jesus Christ are alike in principle; with this difference only, that there is in the first merely a feeble beginning of truth, and that in the religion of Jesus Christ is found the truth in all its fulness and energy.

"According to Vinet (the Vinet of 1831), faith is the intellectual faculty which supplements physical sight.

<sup>1</sup> Astié.

The Christian believes as Leonidas, Brutus, Christopher Columbus believed. It is not the faith of the Apostle Paul which introduces the soul into communion with the life of Christ.

"The distinction between religion and theology does not seem to exist for Vinet at this period. His faith is nothing more than belief in the dogmas taught by theologians. He confuses the teaching of the preachers of the Revival, of the Reformers, of the Fathers of the Church, with the simple burning words which fall from the divine lips of Jesus Christ. It does not occur to him to inquire whether the doctrines which he regards as eternal truth have not made their appearance at certain well-known historic dates. It is on this confusion between the gospel and the conceptions of men that is based the discourse which has for its title, 'The Mysteries of Christianity.'"<sup>1</sup>

"Each of the mysteries that you try to snatch from the system of religion will carry with it some one of the truths which interest directly your salvation. Accept them—not as truths that can save you, but as the necessary accompaniments of the work of love" (Vinet).

"Here is a manifest confusion between the incontestable mysteries which are in the nature of things, and those which the human mind arbitrarily creates when it brings a faulty philosophy to bear on simple truth. Such 'mysteries' are not indispensable to salvation. It is not on account of them, but rather in spite of them, that piety is fostered and spread."

Vinet sent a copy of his work to M. Monnard, with the following letter:—

*To M. Monnard, 1831.*

"I will not have anything to do with rationalism, neither in weak nor in strong doses. When I have once submitted myself to God, I can no longer dispute with Him for the possession of scraps of my confused philoso-

<sup>1</sup> Astié.

phies. . . . But if I seek a logical form of Christianity, I wish it to be consequent in all its directions. I prefer the largeness and liberty of Manuel to the 'strait-jacket' in which Malan would confine his partisans."

"Yet Vinet did not differ as much as he imagined from the Cæsar of the Revival, for he adopted the most characteristic of the ultra-Calvinist doctrines—that of 'special election.' In spite of his protest against rationalism, he is himself an *orthodox rationalist*, and his conceptions of Christianity are purely intellectual."<sup>1</sup>

M. Astié has called the volume before us a "hybrid collection;" and with reason. Some of the sermons are in striking contrast with those from which we have just quoted. From these we learn that there were two Vinets even at this period—one caught in the toils of intellectual orthodoxy, the other reaching onward to the spiritual religion of Jesus Christ. In "The Gospel understood by the Heart," we read:—

"You may have exhausted the force of your reason and the resources of your science in order to establish the authority of the Scriptures,—you may have explained the apparent contradiction of your sacred books,—you may have seized the connection of the most important truths of the gospel;—but, *if you do not love*—the gospel will remain for you a dead letter and a sealed book. . . . Even for those who receive it as a divine religion,—even for those who believe in the Spirit,—it is veiled, it is empty; it is dead so long as the heart is not called into council."

In another sermon, entitled "Grace and Law," Vinet maintains that the law leads naturally to grace, and that grace leads back to law.

"But are there not, even among those who do not admit salvation by grace, men penetrated by the holiness of law, and eagerly desirous to fulfil it? We are speaking of a

<sup>1</sup> Astié.

remarkable and highly interesting class of men,—they are the candidates of grace, if I may so name them. There are some to whom God appears to have manifested Himself as to Moses—on Mount Sinai, with all the majesty of a Legislator and a Judge. By a heavenly favour which one may call a beginning of grace, they have felt the grandeur, the necessity, the inflexibility of the moral law, and have believed themselves able to realize it in their life. . . . But when they understood that the task was practically endless; that one vice extirpated caused another to be perceived; that, after so many corrections of detail, the depths of the soul were not essentially changed . . . then is verified the saying of Jesus Christ: ‘If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.’”

In the “Religions of Man and the Religion of God,” Vinet contrasts Christianity with the religion of the imagination, of the intellect, of sentiment, and of conscience, and shows the incompleteness of each; while in Christianity all the aspirations of human nature find their legitimate outlet. Magnificent perspectives are offered to the imagination: the heart is satisfied by the manifestation of a love which is above all other love, and the intellect by the contemplation of a vast and admirable system. In Christianity all contrasts are conciliated—fear and love, obedience and liberty, action and contemplation, faith and reason.

In the “Atheism of the Ephesians,” Vinet shows that while believing intellectually in the existence of God, a man may be practically “without God.” The thought of Him is not the centre of his thoughts or the soul of his existence. God is to him a scientific dogma,—not a real fact which determines the end of his existence, giving value to his life. His belief in God is almost purely negative: he *permits God to exist*, but this belief does not direct his life nor regulate his actions.



In the "Principle of Christian Morality," Vinet lays down the fact that a system of morality needs a motor to render it practical. The only two that are possible are self-interest and self-devotion.

Self-interest introduces a hostile element, for virtue is essentially the sacrifice of self. The value of an action is made to depend on its result. If promises are attached to vice, it becomes virtue; if menaces are attached to virtue, it becomes vice. Self-interest, carried to its extreme limits, will never rise to the heights of love—the first of all duties. The doctrine we teach is the doctrine of love—the merciful love of God; the grateful love of man. A doctrine which doubles the sense of all duties, the weight of all precepts, the importance of all motives, is the only good morality.

In "The Christian in Active Life," Vinet urged that—

"‘the things that are above’ are the promptings of a renewed heart—the motives, the impulsion of a regenerated soul. It is to love God, to subordinate to Him our life, to seek and to find God in everything. . . . God is in everything that is true, beautiful, great, and useful. He is everywhere except in evil. . . . To love God is to have discovered the secret of life."

Vinet goes on to speak severely of the selfish heart that dares not give itself completely to God or completely to the world.

"Is this forbidden, is this worldly? May one do this and that? What mean these bargainings between man and God? Love has solved the difficulty. This is her divine ‘all for God, and nothing for myself.’ All for God, provided that God is for me. It is Him I will serve, the rest is indifferent. . . . Leave these idle scruples which are attached to a few isolated actions, and consider life as

a whole. . . . If it were possible for the life of one who loves God, and of one who loves Him not, to be exactly alike, *the difference of motive* would alone suffice to separate them entirely."

In reply to those who demand a perfectly authentic miracle, Vinet, in "The Character of Christianity," establishes the fact that *miracles do not convert*. The mind may be convinced, but the heart needs the demonstration of the power of the Spirit. The character of perpetuity and of universalism which Christianity displays is as striking to the reason as the sight of an angel flying across the sky would be to the imagination.

We have dwelt at length upon the contents of this volume, believing it to mark an important point in the history of Vinet's religious and intellectual development. It will be instructive to note his change of view with regard to the relations which exist between faith and reason, displayed in subsequent editions. We cannot close our eyes to the fact that even at this moment when he was paying his largest tribute to intellectualism, Vinet did not succeed in absolutely denying his better self. The basis of his doctrine was the teaching of the Revival in 1831.<sup>1</sup> But more than any previous teacher he sought to bring into relief the moral aspects of Christianity. It is in the regenerating power of the gospel, in its virtue as an incentive to a new life, that he finds the evidence of its divine origin. He insisted on the profoundly human character of Christianity, and on its marvellous adaptation to all the most elevated needs of our nature. It was thus that he prepared the way for an expansion of religious thought.

A letter addressed to M. Forel gives us Vinet's opinion of his recent publication.

<sup>1</sup> Cart.

*To M. Forel, February 1832.*

"I have not gone deep enough. I have only skimmed the surface of the great problem. The needs of the century demand far more, if the intellectual torments of others equal those through which I have passed. I will try to redescend into my Tartarus. I will try to seek there some one of those insolent doubts, those fearful visions, created by reason, against which I only know of one refuge. Have we reached the epoch when all must be said? Must all the secrets of unbelief be revealed? Must we anticipate the objections which it does not owe to itself? I cannot answer. Pascal himself only approached this awful question in trembling."

## CHAPTER XV.

*Death of Doyen Curtat—Retractation of Denunciation of  
Conventicles of Rolle—Invitation to undertake Direc-  
tion of "Semeur"—Journal.*

1832-1834.

IN 1832 the Doyen Curtat passed away.

*To Louis Leresche.*

"I have just heard of the death of M. Curtat, and it has deeply affected me. All that he did for the Church and for us presents itself vividly to my memory, and I mourn for him as a son. God, who knows the heart, has read that of the old pastor; and I think that He has seen there far more Christianity than some persons have been willing to ascribe to him."

A short time after the death of the Doyen, Vinet made a public apology to the Dissenters, against whom he had hurled a satirical denunciation some years previously.

"12th March 1832.

"In representing the doctrine of 'the Conventicle of Rolle' as 'new,' and as a 'curious mixture of humility and pride,' I spoke without knowledge, and I judged wrongly.

"In attributing to certain persons the design of forming a sect and of founding conventicles, I delivered a rash judgment.

"In defending the Christian character of M. Curtat, I did not dream of making an apology for any of his writings."

One cannot forbear inquiring if it was not the consciousness that he was drifting farther and farther from the dogmatic teaching of the Revival, which urged Vinet to display this sensitive regard for the feelings of those with whose principles he was no longer in sympathy.

"New efforts were constantly made to draw Vinet from his retirement. Among the number of those who were anxious to do him honour we must count M. Cousin, who offered to procure for him the chair of Ethics and of 'Pastoral Theology' from the Faculty of Montauban."<sup>1</sup>

*To Louis Leresche, 24th March 1833.*

"This is the third time that I am called to Montauban," wrote Vinet. "These gentlemen have taken it into their heads that I am a learned man. Have I been guilty of giving myself the airs of a savant? For the third time I reply that I am an ass! Perhaps they will believe me!"

The next offer came from Paris. He was invited to undertake the editorship of the *Semeur*, where his articles had attracted the attention of the literary world. Victor Hugo had inquired the name of the critic who united so much delicacy with severity of judgment; and imagining him to be some first-rate man hidden in Paris, he invited Vinet to call on him.

In addition to the editorship of the *Semeur*, Vinet was summoned to help in the work of evangelization (Paris). He was asked to preach sometimes in the faubourg of the Temple. He was told that these sermons would require hardly any preparation, for the audience was composed of poor people. "There were more sabots than shoes, and more blouses than coats."

But Vinet could not adopt this view. He considered that sermons addressed to the working-classes needed as

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

much preparation as those addressed to a cultured audience. As had been the case with the offers from Montauban and Geneva, he declined those from Paris, declaring himself unequal to the task. The sense of the gaps in his studies, and his self-distrust with regard to his religious qualifications, held him back. He was entreated to reconsider his decision. "If you do not come to Paris," wrote one of his correspondents, "I am almost sure that the *Semur* will fail."

*To M. Grandpierre, July 1833.*

"My vacation of four weeks begins to-day," replied Vinet. "They are almost entirely retained by the *Semur*, to which I have promised an article on M. Charpentier's essay, and two articles on the *Mélanges* of Jouffroy, and five or six on Fichte's *Destiny of Man*, articles which oblige the study of all the new German philosophy.

"You know that I compose with difficulty—that I often re-write an article two or three times, so that all my ex-official work is consecrated to the *Semur*. I only tell you this to make you understand that it is impossible for me to consider this question for the present. Fichte and Kant absorb my whole mind."

M. Forel, whom Vinet hastened to consult, complicated the situation by hinting at the probability of his being called to fill a chair at the Academy of Lausanne. Vinet's reply is characteristic:—

*"17th July 1833.*

. . . "When the choice of a profession is concerned, one must take care not to mistake the glow of the imagination for the feelings of the heart. . . . What can be more alarming than the occupation of a position which obliges one to be systematically and officially convinced and faithful? . . . Can I in my writings have outstripped and exaggerated my real self? I consider it to be the last of misfortunes to fill a position which demands hypocrisy."

At length Vinet decided to go to Paris for a time and make a trial of his new duties.

*To M. Scholl.*

"All my tastes, all the desires of my heart, all my interests, keep me in Switzerland; but I fear that I might reproach myself if I did not test the work offered to me."

A month later he writes,—

"If I could inspire all the Vaudois with the sentiments of your sister, it seems as if I would fly to Lausanne, were it only to cut wood. . . . There are still in the Canton of Vaud good honest folk, perhaps more than in any other place in the world. . . . Yet, in spite of all this, I cannot describe the terror with which the thought of Lausanne inspires me. I cannot make it out. To a certain extent Paris frightens me less. Paris is a solitude where one is buried and invisible, when one does not form one of the two or three hundred notabilities of the day. But Basle pleases me still better. I tell myself sometimes that I am captivated by this peace, this monotony, this atmosphere of kindness, and that, for my soul's health, I ought to get out of this box of cotton wool."

Vinet's Journal permits us to follow the progress of his inner life.

*Extracts.*

"1st January 1833.—I have received a letter from M. Monnard, who urges me to accept the post of Counsellor of Public Instruction for the Canton of Vaud.

"I cannot decide, and the thought of Paris terrifies me. . . . The soul is poor and weak, faith seems dead, and courage is nowhere. . . .

"A new proof that I cannot command my temper in dealing with poor Auguste. I am miserable and ashamed, and ill as well. All this proves that I am not regenerate. May God help me! I have done nothing for the child except scold him. He is very backward."

Some explanation is needed here. It was in the realities of family life, in the positive duties of every day, that Vinet found the true touchstone of Christianity. He did not belong to the school of those who, while professing high spirituality, think lightly of moral falls, and charge them to the account of the old Adam.

One of the points on which Vinet reproached himself incessantly was neglect of his paternal duties. His eldest child, Stephanie, was timid and delicate, and learned with difficulty. He prepared for her special use a course of lessons on language and literature. Some of her companions, who were permitted to share this teaching, spoke with gratitude and emotion of the time and pains Vinet devoted to them, while accusing himself of neglect. The second child, Auguste, became deaf when three years of age. His mental development was seriously retarded by this circumstance and by other infirmities. Whether there was something in the character of Auguste which was antipathetic to the father's nature, or whether, in the state of Vinet's health, the task of instructing a deaf and backward child was a burden too heavy to be borne, we cannot determine. But it is certain from the testimony of eye-witnesses that in this case Vinet's self-reproaches were not without foundation, and that his lack of patience sometimes excited the sorrowful surprise of his friends.

*Journal continued.*

"I have felt to-day for the hundredth time that one must not emerge from one's quiet for any attempt—for a visit, for a letter—without placing oneself under the keeping of the Spirit of God, that He may show us each moment things as they really are, and prevent us from illusions respecting the value and the sense of that which we do and say. Vanity and other passions cause us to live constantly in a kind of half intoxication from which we need



to be aroused. . . . When one is happy, praised, borne along on the breath of public favour, one must make one's constant prayer of the words, 'Lord, a thorn from Thy crown.'

"God loves those who *give cheerfully*. This can be applied to all kinds of service. Am I penetrated with this truth?

"Pride is the last stronghold of selfishness. This is why the humiliations that one inflicts on oneself fall short of the mark. Those one receives from others are worth a great deal more.

"Yesterday I reproached myself for not having governed my tongue. I have not governed it any better to-day. This is because my heart is full of bitterness and gall. I do not know what vice I do not possess!"

Towards the end of the year these daily confessions became still sadder. His moral nature was embittered by physical suffering.

"*31st December*.—Here closes a year of my life,—a year that covers me with confusion,—a year in which I have gone back instead of advancing,—in which I have recognised the gifts of Providence without adoring Him,—in which I have learned to know myself better than ever without becoming better,—a year in which my negligence of my children has borne visible fruit,—in which I have been a thousand times ungrateful towards my wife: unjust, bitter, prompt to think and to speak evil, and in which my conscience has seemed to be seared. May God help me!"

Vinet saw the day approach for his departure for Paris with ever-increasing terror. At length he came to the conclusion that it was impossible to respond even temporarily to the call he had received.

"*19th January 1834*.—The considerations that have brought me to this decision are individual, interior, known to none but God. The functions offered me demand, not only particular convictions which I do not possess, but also a spiritual life which is wholly wanting,

*which one must possess before one can display it, and which I will not simulate. . . .* God does not promise to give blessings to workmen who are not called. He promises them to the weakest so long as they remain at their post, and as long as they are true and sincere. . . . But I will not tempt God by placing myself in a kind of necessity of outstepping the limits of my character, and going beyond the truth."

A few weeks later Vinet refused the offers of the Council of the Canton of Vaud, alleging his incapacity. This time he insisted less on the feebleness of his religious life than on that of his studies, and on the want of the practical qualities which render a man suitable for direction and action.

*To M. Jaquet, 1834.*

"I do not know anything well," he wrote to M. Jaquet. "I am an ignoramus with a smattering of science. Add to this the incurable disadvantage of my character, the absence of presence of mind, of accuracy of perception, of firmness, and of logic. The practical element is absolutely lacking. I only know after the event what ought to have been done. Before and during the event I know nothing. Morally long-sighted (just as I am physically short-sighted), I must see everything at a distance in order to see it well."

Fresh offers were showered upon him. Among them came a call from the French Church of Frankfort. Vinet refused with a heavy heart, thinking of his family and of his children who looked to him for support; but although he preached from time to time, he shrank from the idea of undertaking the cure of souls. The state of his health made him regret the pecuniary advantages of which he deprived his children.

*To M. Forel, October 1834.*

"I suffer from the least vicissitudes of temperature. I am serving my apprenticeship to rheumatism. I can

only bear work in small doses. I hardly ever feel any joy in composing. . . . Yet, owing to special circumstances, I close one after the other the doors that open for me on the side of quiet and tranquillity. . . . It is almost as sweet to wait on God as to receive from Him. (Here note Vinet's absolute sincerity.) *At least others say so.* I should like to know it from experience."

And so it came to pass that Vinet remained in Basle, and that the only change he knew was that of "turning from substantive to participle, and from participle to substantive."

## CHAPTER XVI.

*Political Agitation—Basle—Ill-Health—Course of  
Lectures on the Moralists.*

1833–1835.

THE political troubles which had long agitated Basle were not yet over.

Switzerland was practically divided into two countries. Several cantons, carried away by the revolutionary sentiment, had formed an alliance, to which the city of Basle, Neuchâtel, and the cantons of the centre, representing the Conservative and aristocratic tendency, had replied by the formation of another league, called the League of Saarnen. A conflict was inevitable. The troops marched to Basle, and the League of Saarnen was speedily dissolved. A court of arbitration was charged with the division between the city and the country of the possessions of the State, including the literary museum and public endowments.

*To M. Jaquet, 1833.*

“Our university will cease to exist,” wrote Vinet mournfully. “The library, contemporary with the invention of printing,—a monumental collection, rich in manuscripts, in precious pictures, in memories and treasures of the ancient glory of Basle,—will be divided, and three-fifths transported to some barn, and then sold to a second-hand dealer, because the people, who had been led to hope for ready money, care neither for folios nor for pictures.

Our professors will leave; the colony of letters will no longer exist, and a centre of light will be extinguished."

Happily, these dark visions were not realized. The country folk preferred a sum of money to a share in the dingy folios, and the generosity of the citizens repaired the breaches made in the fortunes of this venerable institution.

*To M. Alexis Forel, November 1833.*

"I am profoundly convinced," wrote Vinet, "that this agitation will not cease until the practical atheism which devours society has been itself absorbed by the ancient faith. . . . One must cease to regard liberty as the *unique* need of the human race. She is the soil without which the tree of virtue cannot flourish. She is not the sun that warms and vivifies the sap."

When tranquillity was restored, people began to busy themselves once more with Vinet's career, and he was named Professor of Literature at the university. But he still continued his elementary teaching in spite of ever-increasing delicacy of health.

*"April 1835.*

"During two months and a half I have been confined to my room, incapable of any work. If I lack patience, I do not lack hope. I believe God will spare me. How can I complain of such a light trial when better men have much heavier ones?"

Under such disadvantageous circumstances Vinet's literary ability could only be displayed at rare intervals. Nevertheless these years of physical suffering and weakness were not wasted.

"In response to the request of my old audience, I have begun a public course of lectures on the 'Moralists of the

Eighteenth Century;’ a subject which has caused me to wade through a good deal of mud during the past weeks. I am impatient to place my foot on some such precious stone as Vauvenargues. But how am I to avoid the bogs of Diderot, of Helvetius, and of Holbach? It is a large and disagreeable undertaking.”

By moralists Vinet did not only mean those who have written moral treatises, but also those descriptive writers—novelists or poets—who have reproduced the manners, ideas, and needs of their epoch. He concerned himself with all writers who were capable of furnishing him with authentic information respecting the moral conceptions which have had their course in society. His aim was to compare them with each other, and, above all, with the perfect morality of the gospel.

“All human systems can be reduced to four or five principal ideas which succeed each other at more or less distant epochs. They occupy by turns the theatre of the world under different aspects and names. Each receives a particular physiognomy from the epoch of its introduction, as, for example, the ancient system of Epicurus, and the epicurism of the eighteenth century. These are the different attempts which will occupy our attention. We will consider what man has sought and found. One fact will strike us. Man has never of himself been able to discover more than one side of the truth. . . . All the systems, beginning with that of self-interest, present some side of the truth. They are the *débris* of a living body which in actual fact remains isolated and lifeless. . . . It is beyond human power to constitute a whole out of these diverse elements. The bond of moral truth comes from elsewhere.”<sup>1</sup>

“One recognises here Vinet’s dominant idea, namely, that in morality the criterion of truth is to be found in the relation which exists between doctrines and the various

<sup>1</sup> Vinet, Introductory Lecture.

and apparently contradictory needs of the human heart. To know man is the beginning of all knowledge, and it is in order to furnish this basis that literature is called into council. Its testimony is the most universal, the most disinterested, and the most authentic that we can discover. In Vinet's hands the study of literature is transformed into the study of Christian psychology. In his lectures on the Moralists, all is subordinated to the essential aim, and literature becomes the pure instrument of morality."<sup>1</sup>

Portions of these lectures have been published in the volume entitled *Moralists of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, and in the *History of French Literature in the Eighteenth Century*.

In the introduction to the former work, Vinet defines morality as the "art of conforming one's actions to the authority of conscience."

Under the title of Moralists, he includes "those who give to the human soul a just idea of its value" by means of the study of human nature. These are *descriptive moralists*. Those who concern themselves with precepts and with the motive springs of action—*scientific moralists*. Then come *political moralists*, for "political systems correspond with the moral ideas from which they draw their strength." But best and highest of all are the *poet moralists*.

"These are the great revealers of human nature, and in a sense the first of philosophers. Every great poet is a philosopher, and every great philosopher is a poet. There is no high philosophy without imagination: observation and induction, the two crutches of science, do not advance if they are not inspired by the vivifying power of the imagination. The genius of Newton and of La Place touches the genius of the poet more closely than the vulgar can imagine. . . . The true poets are those who

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

have received from God, with the gift of expression, the power of penetrating deeper than others the things of the heart and of life. . . . They express the secret thoughts of humanity. . . . It is not imitation: it is reality. I only ask the poet to be true, and not to interest himself in vice: here is *all his positive morality*. All moral truth is part of Christianity, which is the whole of truth. Christianity claims for its own everything that is true. . . . It is thus that poets have been *unconsciously Christian* by their portrayal of human nature. . . . Thus Goethe's *Faust* is a Christian work, and the *Misanthrope* of Molière is a sermon on James iii. 17. . . . Every written article is in my eyes *moral*, in the sense that it bears witness to a particular condition of society. For literature is the 'expression of social existence.' . . . The witness of history has not the sincerity of that of literature. The witness of literature is unconscious and involuntary."

Vinet chooses the sixteenth century for his point of departure—

"because it is the beginning of a new era. The religious movement of the century was before all things *moral*. It was the effort of the moral idea to reconquer its rights. The mind could no longer adhere to religion separated from its substance—morality. . . . Everything in Christianity is moral; the divinity of Christ, redemption: all the mysteries of religion are moral. Their end is the salvation and the regeneration of man. What is this regeneration if it be not moral?

"Luther's dominant idea of salvation by grace is not a human imagination, but the *root principle* of the Bible, and far from injuring morality, it is its foundation and its life."

We can only allow ourselves a brief glimpse at some of the subjects treated in this captivating volume.

The negative tendency of the sixteenth century is expressed in the works of Rabelais.<sup>1</sup> He was the father

<sup>1</sup> François Rabelais, 1483–1553.



of scoffers, the Homer of the race of satirical, humouristic, and observing poets. His first work, the *Life of the Great Gargantua, the father of Pantagruel*, is a satirical allegory directed against the Court of Francis I. "Laughter," says Rabelais, "is the natural bent of man." It was certainly the natural bent of Rabelais. His *bons-mots* have been quoted a thousand times, and allusions to his writings colour and brighten the conversation of to-day. His excellent judgment discerned the folly of mankind, but it did not make him sorrowful. Rabelais may be compared with Aristophanes. Swift and Sterne belong to the same family.

The obscenity of his writings did not scandalize the readers of the day. Not only was it admired, but the *Life of Gargantua* was regarded as a "serious work." This work contained one valuable element—destruction. There are moments when the heart bounds at the thought of the demolition of abuses long endured. In the history of Thamous, Rabelais becomes tragic when a voice is heard crying aloud that "Pan, the great god, is dead."

Often Rabelais displays a profound and philosophic view of the universe. Thus when he ascribes to *hunger* the invention of the arts, or when he satirically attributes the continuity of existence to a "system of borrowing and lending." He affords proof of great good sense in many of his judgments, and there is nothing which is so closely allied to genius as common sense. "Thus Bacon opened the path to natural science by the expression of a common-sense truism—that systems must be based on recognised facts. Here common sense and genius are merged." It was necessary to react against tradition and authority, as did the Reformers in the name of divine authority, or as did Rabelais in the simple name of common sense.

In his study of M. de Montaigne (1533-1592), Vinet breaks a lance in favour of *inconsistency*. He quotes the opinion of Madame de Staël, who maintains that one cannot be perfectly true and sincere without being somewhat inconsistent.

"Outside of Christian truth there is only an *artificial* consistency. None of the impulsions which we receive from nature and from the world are strong enough to bring us to the end of the line of duty . . . thus conscience has to be completed by vanity. Virtue would not go so far, says La Rochefoucauld, if vanity did not bear its company. . . . There is no motive save the love of God, which is powerful enough to carry us to the end. If there are some *inconsistent Christians*, it is because they are not *Christian enough*."

Vinet considers three points: the Book, the Author, and the Doctrine.

The "essay" is less a book than a conversation, where the thinker is more prominent than the writer. Balzac writes that Montaigne knows what he is saying, but not what he is going to say. "I have not made my book; my book has made me," he says himself. He is the subject-matter of his work; he gives himself as a sample of humanity. To study oneself is to study the human species, but one must carefully separate the general from the individual nature.

Montaigne's education had made him independent and natural. His father had brought him up to be a man as well as a gentleman, and had early accustomed him to intercourse with the poor. He was the "man of nature," but nature cannot teach the relations between man and the Infinite. Montaigne shuts out God. Consequently he has no morality. Where else can one find a standard of truth? He speaks of conscience, but conscience (according to Montaigne) is only another word

for custom. Conscience is the sentiment of obligation, but to whom? To man. The moment that one obeys oneself, all obligation ceases. To the idea of right? It is not in the nature of things to yield obedience to an idea. In substituting God for the right, we place a reality in the room of an idea. The voice of conscience, is it the ego or the non-ego? If it be the non-ego (as it is impossible to doubt), is not this non-ego God? If conscience is the ambassador of God, how is it possible to receive the ambassador and to reject the sovereign? "For three-fourths of mankind," says Cousin, "there is no morality apart from religion." Although Montaigne ignores God, he cannot ignore death: "the knot which clinches all morality." He takes refuge in Stoicism. "Montaigne was the type of the Gallic mind, of the practical sense which discriminates what is palpable, which trusts to appearances, which has taste, movement, spirit, but little seriousness or spirituality. Montaigne, La Fontaine, Mme. de Sévigné, Voltaire will always be favourites, because their moral ideas are on a level with those of their readers."

With Montaigne, Vinet couples the name of Pierre Charron. "They have the same end in view: the substitution of morality for dogma, and of the law of nature for that of revelation." Charron's principal work, *Wisdom*, teaches the art of right living, which he entirely separates from belief. He beholds man under five principal aspects: vanity, weakness, inconsistency, misery, presumption. Vinet asks how is a moral edifice to be raised on such a basis? and he combats Charron's idea that the soul is disposed to virtue by means of argument. Passions can only be driven out by the expulsive power of a new affection. He complains that religion is an *extra* in Charron's system, instead of God being the centre and pivot of moral life.

Christianity seizes man by the two poles, the ego and the non-ego, and satisfies the ego by the inexhaustible aliment offered to the soul, which, thrilled by gratitude, learns to love.

According to Charron, primitive morality may be altered to suit passing circumstances. Vinet replies that God has graven on the heart the immutable law of duty which cannot change, and Christianity has rehabilitated human nature.

Etienne de la Boétie (1530–1563). Vinet points out that La Boétie's discourse on voluntary servitude—a furious attack on the monarchical principle—might have brought about a revolution at any other period, and he quotes Voltaire, saying, "There is nothing in the world so advantageous as to arrive at the right moment." This work contains no trace of the scepticism of Montaigne.

Jean Bodin (1530–1596). In his study of Bodin's interesting work, *The Republic*, Vinet combats the idea that Moses was the founder of a religion rather than lawgiver. If God has given a religion to mankind, He has given but one, and this religion existed before Moses. A law which does not supply a vital motive of action cannot be called a religion.

It is interesting to note that Vinet numbers among the moralists Michel de l'Hôpital, that splendid model of Christian Stoicism.

Vinet shows that the philosophers of the sixteenth century made doubt their aim as well as their point of departure. This is contrary to human nature, which needs to believe in something, and those who turn it from its natural impulse only succeed in casting it back to the side of authority. In the sixteenth century, authority was the foundation of all belief.

"Although personal conviction must be the basis of our intellectual operations, man is not so constituted that he can form on every subject a special independent opinion. Doubtless our opinions seem to belong entirely to ourselves; but if we take the trouble to mount to their source, we shall find that *the thought of another has given birth to our own*. It is by assimilation rather than by creation that it becomes our own.

"The philosophers of the seventeenth century, instead of attacking the principle of authority, sought to establish its natural limits, and to introduce new convictions. This was especially the work of Descartes, the contemporary of Bacon, who shares with him the glory of having created experimental philosophy."

Self-interest was the basis of the morality of La Rochefoucauld. His maxims denote the imperious claims of the "ego," and the interpolation of the "non-ego;" the former by the dominant principle of selfishness as the mainspring of action, the latter by the singular need of attributing to a disinterested motive acts which proceed from self-interest.

In La Bruyère we have not only the historian of the epoch, but the painter of human nature in general, and the possessor of a truly Christian faith.

Pascal places himself between "the two systems which have divided philosophers, that of Epicurus and of Zeno,—crushes them, and evolves from their ruins a new system, wherein the grandeur and the misery of man figure as two corresponding truths, whose meeting point is the point of departure of all true speculation in moral philosophy. He brings out with marvellous force the truth of Christianity, which alone has recognised our true condition and the contradictions of our nature, conciliating them, not by reasoning but by Fact,—superior to all the data of reason."

Vinet reserves for a later period the consideration of

those writers who believe Christian truth to be the basis of morality. "Bossuet, in whom all the majesty of Christian dogma seems concentrated; Bourdaloue, the passionate dialectician; Massillon, the universal confessor of human nature; Saurin, the champion of morality; Fénelon, whose name is synonymous with all that is graceful in religion; Nicole (of the school of Port-Royal), whose Essays are a treasure-house of wisdom; Duguet, and Quesnel."

Under an appearance of stagnation the age of Louis XIV. concealed a secret movement, and a reaction against the orthodoxy which sought to rule all intellectual manifestations. In literature, in politics, in philosophy, the reaction was profound; instead of morality, Epicureanism; and instead of faith, scepticism. These tendencies were strengthened by communication with England, where free-thinking was introduced by Charles II. at the same time as moral licence. The character of the eighteenth century will be more universal, more human, more distinctly French than that of the seventeenth. Between these two periods, St. Evremond, Bayle, Massillon, and Fontenelle may be regarded as intermediaries.

#### 1613-1703.

St. Evremond, the friend of Ninon de l'Enclos, was the preacher of Epicureanism, which is "tantamount to the negation of all religion and of all moral principle."

#### 1647-1706.

Pierre Bayle was foremost among the founders of the new philosophy of the eighteenth century. He has been called the Montaigne of the seventeenth century. Vinet styles him the "Corypheus of doubt."

"Scepticism is in reality a malady of the heart rather than of the mind. Man is created for knowledge; it is the primitive need of his nature. There is nothing more legitimate than to employ doubt as a precaution against error. *Thus to doubt is to believe.* There is more love and more respect for truth in the conscientious efforts of those who fight during long years for its appropriation, than in the weak assent of minds carried away by the current of opinion. But to admit doubt to be other than the means or method of arriving at truth, is to misunderstand human nature. The preachers of doubt, by removing certainty, have abolished all the enlightened principles of morality, and moral ideas are forced to give way to transient impulse."

Bayle's central doctrine was the superiority of atheism to Christianity. "It was the first time that the foundations of religion had been attacked, and many minds were shaken. Nevertheless, Bayle was the means of rendering service to religion. Attacked in the possession of its most precious treasure, men's souls were awakened to the necessity of deeper knowledge. From age to age the arguments adduced in support of Christianity grow more coherent, and from the friction between faith and doubt, flashes of new light are emitted."

The cream of the volume is found in the two concluding essays: "On Spontaneity in matters of Philosophy," and "Will seeking its Law." Vinet quotes the saying of Pascal, "*The will is the organ of belief.*" The dawn of philosophy was sombre and troubled; its searching after light was laborious; the moral being had lost its centre, and the will, separated from reason, sought by means of the intellect to effect a union. The passions and prejudices of the "ego" are fatal to the impartiality of research. Each aspires to bring his life into conformity with his belief; but if this belief is nothing but his own will in disguise, he is reduced to turn in a

vicious circle. Even if it were possible to conceive a perfect type of humanity, he would not consent to accept himself for rule; he would seek a rule outside and above him. "We cannot," says Kant, "imagine the idea of obligation without joining to it the idea of another, which is God." Vinet shows that the gospel of Jesus Christ has conquered self-will, "nailing it to the cross." The morality of the gospel is not the partial and successive restoration of man, but the implanting of a new principle of life and action which has for its basis a fact of immeasurable import,—a fact which pacifies the soul, organizes chaos, rules the world; God taking the nature of man in order to effect his salvation. Strong in the possession of this stupendous fact, the gospel puts the pretensions of human moralists to shame.

"I do not know what is meant by receiving the *morality* of the gospel and rejecting the *dogma*. One might as easily try to transplant a tree without its roots. And who can say where dogma ends and morality begins? In the gospel, dogma is morality, and morality is dogma, and their respective characteristics depend on the intimate organic union, which make them the continuation one of the other. . . . On one side the morality of the gospel makes great demands on the soul, by claiming a complete surrender of all that it loves, it wills, and it is. This is the indispensable condition of true morality—the rigid exclusion of the ego."



## CHAPTER XVII.

*Physical Weakness—Spiritual Growth—Letters—Journal.*

"THE book," says M. Rambert, "upon which Vinet worked the most assiduously during those long years of physical suffering, was the living tablet of the heart."

*To M. Forel, 10th April 1835.*

"It rests with me whether I shall be able to extract blessings from this long and precious Sabbath which God is providing for me," wrote Vinet to his friend, and his correspondence permits us to follow him in his efforts to "redeem the time" of those "evil days."

*To M. Vulliemin.*

"I expect a great deal of good to result from your notice of M. Gonthier.<sup>1</sup> He formed one of the small number of *complete patterns* of Christianity. Human weakness is the cause that when Christianity enters the soul, finding itself cramped for room, it takes its place by force, tearing some part away. There are few Christians who remain entirely *men*, although Christ, our model, was perfectly manly, and He has shown us by His example that Christianity and humanity are not in contradiction. M. Gonthier has cast nothing aside (except sin), and every one can contemplate in him the Christian father, husband, and son; the Christian philanthropist, citizen, and thinker."

"To-day I have spent a peaceful Sunday. I read the Bible with my children. They were attentive, and the time was well spent. Ah, I realize how much I have injured them by my impatience and my negligence. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Uncle to M. Vulliemin.

"I have greatly enjoyed making the acquaintance of the poet Knapp. He is a country pastor; a tall large man, with a gentle, serene, and cheerful countenance. His manners are simple and kindly, and he is yet more impregnated with Christianity than with poetry. Here is an extract he has made from a poem by Schwab:—

"They say that Kant is the inventor of the categorical imperative (the principle which commands obedience to the law of duty). This is a mistake. The system was invented 300 years before by a minister of Bohemia, named Johannes. This minister, returning from a journey, found himself one evening in a forest. He was assailed by robbers, who, having deprived him of the money that they found upon him, asked him if he had anything more, and on receiving a reply in the negative, they let him go. Escaped from their hands, Johannes reflected with satisfaction that he had saved from their rapacity a few pieces of gold, sown in the lining of his coat. Then the categorical imperative raises its head and its lion's voice, and says to him: "Thou hast lied." "But my children need it." "Thou hast lied." "But — but —" At each "but" the categorical imperative repeats, "*Thou hast lied.*" Then Johannes turned back in the dark, and went in search of the robbers. He found them occupied in dividing his money, and, advancing into their midst, he said, "I have lied; here is the gold!" The robbers burst out laughing; but almost at the same moment the categorical imperative raised its lion's head, and said to them, "If he has lied, you have stolen. If he has violated the eighth commandment, you have violated the ninth." This was repeated with a force which overwhelmed them. They confessed that they had sinned. They humiliated themselves before Johannes. They invited him to pray for them. The minister and the robbers prayed together . . . and thus was discovered the categorical imperative.'

"Yesterday I received a visit from—whom? From M. César Malan. His greeting was affable and pleasant. Then came conversation, or rather a monologue; then—a sermon on the assurance of salvation. . . . This evening, at the farewell meeting to M. Bonnet, Malan made the happy

choice of the Epistle of St. John to Gaius, but he destroyed the effect of the selection by speaking on a totally different subject. Of what? Of his favourite doctrine of assurance. 'The first care of one who begins to believe is to assure himself that his faith is seated in the heart—that it is really an affection of the soul.' Yet the same preacher tells us every moment that we must not consult our sensations, but only the written word. Twice in the same sermon he has insisted on the fact that the Holy Spirit is only given *after* one has believed. It follows, then, that we believe *by ourselves*—that we *give ourselves* faith. And yet Paul has said, 'None can say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, save by the Holy Ghost.' . . .

"The visit which I was expecting has taken place. M. Malan began by asking me for a pipe. Bonnet drew out his, and we talked and smoked. I thought that I ought to be frank, and not appear, by my silence, to acquiesce in all their opinions. I raised the objections I have stated above, and met with but a feeble response. The stone once thrown, I did not amuse myself with hearing it roll. One can do better than to argue, and really Malan was edifying. . . . Finally, he took me in hand. It was, of course, the usual question of, *How is your soul?* I took it in the spirit in which it had been uttered. I endeavoured to generalize, without avoiding the individual application. . . . Then he proposed that we should pray together, to which I willingly consented.

"*January* 1835.—This evening I finished reading to Sophie a sermon of Theremin's on the barren fig-tree. I was greatly struck by all he said respecting the acts and thoughts by which each day should begin.

"*10th January*.—The first thing I did on awaking was to judge and condemn my neighbour! That does not resemble the counsels of Theremin.

"This afternoon I have read with M. Chappuis some pages of Rochat's *Meditations on Hezekiah*; and the confession of sin made by this prince before asking to be cured made me reflect on the importance of confession as a means and as a sign of progress. . . .

"The theology of the Revival lays down a certain course

of development—an orthodox history of conversion and of all that follows thereon. . . . Things ought to take place in a certain manner and in a certain order, and not otherwise. Being apprized of all this, one lends oneself to it readily. People run the danger of being artificially impressed and of creating fictitious sentiments. The soul loses all *naïveté*, spontaneity disappears, and the religion of the heart becomes mechanical. . . .

“However feebly the mind is brought to bear on God and on His word, there ensues an invisible influence on thought and action. But how abandoned and miserable one is when this upward look is wanting!”

Every now and then an undertone of sadness rises to the surface. We are apt, in the presence of this abundant mental activity, to lose sight of the fact that Vinet's life was one of continuous struggle against the ravages of a painful malady.

“*April*.—This lovely spring sunshine, this almost summer warmth, has not reanimated me. It is a strange sensation to see everything around one spring to life—everything *rejoice*—and not be able to participate in this joy in existence.

“*5th May*.—‘Everything for the people, and nothing by them’—this is what men dare to profess. ‘All by the people, and nothing for them’—this is what is practised without being professed. . . . I have had a restless night. I dreamed, among other things, that I was conversing with M. de Châteaubriand, and that I said to him, ‘Genius is like the marmot, that nourishes itself with its own substance; but it only does this in winter,—and genius in all seasons.’ Then I questioned him with regard to the Christianity of his historical *Studies*. He replied, ‘Christianity and social progress are the same thing.’ . . .

“*24th*.—I have had a conversation on the subject of progress with my friend Verny. It seems to me that social progress is inevitably derived from material progress, which is the necessary consequence of the continuous movement of intelligence stimulated by interest. . . .

Christianity furnishes the sole example of social progress proceeding naturally from moral elements.

"To 'conduct oneself with our friends as if they may one day become our enemies,' is an odious rule. But never to lose sight, even in moments of the most perfect unrestraint, of their weakness and of our own, and to conduct ourselves in the light of this knowledge,—this rule is prudent, and in harmony with charity. . . .

"Facts are the true parents of theories, which are reasoned out afterwards. . . .

"The faults of women are produced, or increased, by their ignorance. To have the mind active and empty is a great danger." . . .

*To M. Forel, 1st July.*

"The best means of perpetuating the blessings of civilisation is to admit women to the privileges of instruction. One would then see what this lever can do when once it is applied.

"30th September.—We do not see the multitude, the myriad of sins, until the divine light falls on their obscure depths. Thus the dust flying in a room becomes invisible until the sun penetrates the darkness, and we see the grains of dust moving by millions in its rays.

"I allow the truth of the saying, 'Who works, prays;' if one will add the inseparable pendant, 'Who prays, works.'"

*To Madame Vinet, 7th September 1835.*

"In seeing the happiness which Leresche derives from his children, I have lamented the severity, or rather the impatience, that deprived me of the same enjoyment. On the other hand, I have made consoling reflections with regard to other families. I have seen that faith and Christian principles have not prevented parents from spoiling their children in such a way that later religious teaching will have much difficulty in overcoming these early influences.

"I have thought of my own children, who, less saturated by sermonings and ascetic habits, are yet, thanks to God,

exempt from many things that these religious but over-tender parents could never extirpate from the hearts of their children. These observations are not new. I do not know in how many pious families I have not noticed that the children were very badly brought up! The parents believe in the gospel and in the Holy Spirit, but they do not believe in education. And yet what is religion if it is not an instrument of education—God adapted to our moral being such as He has made or such as He has found it? One trusts to the force of a truth outside of ourselves, and, in the meantime, one accumulates every possible obstacle. There is a truth within us which must be cultivated and made good use of. There is the power of habit in nature,—a power which is incalculable in its depth, in its intensity, and in its extent,—and there is an invaluable energy in example.

“Example and habit : let these two levers be Christian, and the result will be a Christian culture which religious teaching will only systematize and consolidate. These are truths which ought to be proclaimed on the house-tops. Let us foster sentiments while waiting for the moment to give ideas ; give life while waiting for knowledge.”

Vinet returns to this subject in a letter addressed to a friend.

“18th September 1835.

“You have observed and reflected too much not to know that Christian parents can spoil their children, and even that they are particularly disposed to do so. They place their confidence in the principles inculcated by Christian teaching, but these principles will exercise slight force on the soul that has not been prepared to comprehend them. Before Christian notions, the child must be given Christian habits and affections ; he must be Christian in the soul before he becomes Christian in the spirit. We might speak a great deal about Jesus Christ to a child, and yet bring him up as a heathen ; we can give him a Christian heart without speaking to him of Jesus Christ. Without a particular intervention of God no later teaching could

repair the harm done to a child by the extreme blind tenderness of his parents.

"24th November.—*Apropos* of the *Chants du Crépuscule*: V. Hugo. It is clear that the poet suffers from *ennui*. Try as hard as you will, you can never produce poetry from *ennui*. There is only one thing so poetical as doubt, —that is faith!

"27th November.—A long discussion (with MM. Emile Souvestre, de Wette, Verny, etc.) on the subject of *Bildung* (culture) by means of the study of natural science. But they forgot to define the word *Bildung*. I take it to be the harmony of man with God, with himself, with mankind, and the world of sense.

"I wish to write an article in order to show how foolish it is to suppose that Christianity, which has survived all the attacks of human thought, will not be able to withstand the writings of Strauss.

"31st December.—The last evening of the year has been a painful one in every sense. Poor Auguste gives us new occasion for serious anxiety on his account. . . .

"1st January 1836.—We began the new year with tears. We read together the 85th Psalm, and were struck by its applicability to our case.

"2nd March.—After having remarked that the life of many persons was inconsistent with their profession of Christianity, is it not permitted to hope for the best with regard to the religious condition of those persons who edify me by the consistency of their life?

"14th March.—To display energy in little things is the sign of a feeble character. There are some people who stretch all their muscles to break the wing of a butterfly.

"People like to be dominated rather than to be indoctrinated. Casimir Pèrier is more acceptable than M. Guizot.

"Voltaire speaks fluently of happiness; man wishes it to be infinite.

"There are certain things about which we ought never to speak save out of the abundance of the heart. The abuse of pious expressions is calculated to enfeeble the sentiments they express.

"There is more force, and consequently more eloquence, in the careful assignment of each truth to its proper place than in all the transports of speech and thought.

"I have been led to reflect on the degree of inconsiderateness to which I can arrive through being myself an object of consideration,—on the habit one can acquire of receiving without giving. I will take care; my illness has made me too exacting. . . . More and more suffering, and weak. I begin to entertain sorrowful previsions.

"Moral force alone is real; material force has never been anything but its instrument.

"If slavery is disorder, disorder is also slavery.

"Around the word order, as well as around that of liberty, the worst passions can be assembled.

"13th July.—I have continued with facility my discourses on 2 Tim. iii. 7. Ought I to congratulate myself on this facility? Do I compose with the seriousness which is necessary? Am I a writer or a preacher? But on this subject I can speak from experience, I have *seen these truths in action*. . . .

"The disinterestedness of our hosts has afforded me a subject of edification and of warning. What are our acquired virtues in comparison with certain natural gifts? There is a sermon yet to be written on natural virtue.

"Let us be on our guard against an error which is a form of ingratitude. There is in the worst day of the condition of the least favoured enough to bring each of God's creatures to his knees. Blessings abound. Everything that is bad must be laid to our charge, inasmuch as if we are not the authors of the evil, we have at least not succeeded in changing it into good.

"22nd September.—I have been obliged to spend the day in bed. I have been, as regards reading, a veritable ostrich. Read two or three sermons of Massillon, two of Sailers, five or six pages of Chrysostom in Greek, four journals, a part of the *School of Fathers* (Piron), some articles of Geoffroy, part of the *Life of Frederick II.*, by Lord Dover, etc. etc.

"To-day, I have blackened my imagination and saddened my heart by reading *Caleb Williams*, a poisonous book.



"I am again reading *Paradise Lost*. Its beauties send me into a state of ecstasy.

"The simple phrase, 'Love your children for their sake and for your own,' well considered and taken to heart, contains all the secret of moral education.

"One cannot be the master of the judgments that one forms of people; but one ought to be, to a certain point, of one's feelings towards them.

"14th November 1836.—Every time that I have composed with spirit, it has seemed to me as though another was dictating what I wrote; and in reading it over, I seemed to be reading the work of another. . . . The term inspiration is certainly just.

"It is the province of others to reveal us to ourselves, just as strangers teach a country what it really is.

"December 1836.—I have received a visit from M. Nouguiér,<sup>1</sup> who talked most interestingly of his life's work. How small I feel by the side of these strong, firm, persevering wills, and how old I am in comparison with these vigorous old men! Oh, if I could revive even at this eleventh hour, and, after having so long chattered about Christianity, become at last actually and truly Christian!"

<sup>1</sup> M. Nouguiér, of Nîmes, the founder of various charitable institutions.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

*Vinet's "Cure of Souls" — Letter to a Jew — Letters to  
E. Souvestre—M. de Châteaubriand.*

THE extracts given in the preceding chapter afford an idea of the manner in which Vinet understood the functions of a "director of conscience."<sup>1</sup>

After having dreamed of "a quiet parsonage with Sophie," he refused to enter the ministry when he had once realised all its gravity. He pushed his scruples so far as to refuse to fulfil the duties of a pastor towards the sick and afflicted. He gave as his reason, that there was so much to correct in his own character, that he could not undertake to exhort and reprove his neighbour. He did not depart from this line of conduct, save when he felt distinctly called to do so. These cases were not rare, and it may be said that Vinet had his "cure of souls." Tact, humility, and gentleness were associated in his case with perfect frankness, and he knew how to speak to the point when necessary.

A remarkable example of this is found in a letter that Vinet addressed to a Jewish Rabbi, his former pupil. We learn that he showed marked consideration towards those of his pupils who were of Jewish origin. He honoured in them "an illustrious and persecuted race."

The young Rabbi in question had submitted a sermon for Vinet's criticism; he received the following reply:—

. . . "All morality in the Bible is religious, and, if I

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

dare to say it, your discourse is not religious enough. . . . Your precepts belong rather to *human* morality, and certainly you know as well as I do that the regeneration of your people cannot be drawn from such a source. I can only feel astonished that—the preacher of a law eminently theocratic, where everything, down to the smallest detail, is attributed to God, and receives the solemn sanction: ‘Thus saith the Eternal’—you can neglect to give this same sanction to the exhortations you address to your brethren. Your discourse is rather the discourse of a philosopher—of a philanthropist—than of an Israelite.

“Not only ought you to speak much of God, but you ought also to speak of the Messiah. . . . Your religion is full of the Messiah. He is the key of your law, the justification of your history, the light of your destiny. . . . Without the Messiah, you neither know why you suffer nor why you exist.

“It is the expectation of the Messiah which holds you united. Take away the Messiah, and nothing remains for you but to abdicate as a nation, and lose yourself as quickly as possible among the ‘goim,’ as a river loses itself in the ocean.

“Without the Messiah you are without hope in this world or in the next, where you will arrive loaded with sins from which none can free you. It is absolutely necessary, then, in the name of your eternal interests, that you should speak of a Messiah. If you believe in Him, why do you not speak? If you do not believe, what then is the Jewish nationality and religion? A vain word, a ‘non-sense.’ . . . I offer these remarks in the persuasion that you do not consider yourself merely as an officer of morality, but as a servant of the living God: the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, who are living at His right hand.”

This fraternal correction was not wanting in force and strength,<sup>1</sup> but generally Vinet preferred gentler ways. His correspondence offers numerous and touching ex-

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

amples. He has so often spoken of his impatience, of his bitterness, of his stony heart, that if we are silent respecting the favours which he scattered around him, our conception of his character would lack proportion. One example will suffice. A man whose name has since become celebrated had the good fortune to come across a volume of Vinet's sermons. A correspondence ensued. Visits succeeded letters, and before long, friendly relations of a most touching character were formed.

"Let us bless the name of this Saviour whom we have the happiness to know, whose powerful hand raises us above the uncertainties of earth; who simplifies all our thoughts and all our ways; who satisfies our mind with His light, and our heart with His loving-kindness. There is no noble form of joy which we do not owe to Him, that of knowing as well as that of loving Him. And yet, however great the first may be, *i.e.* the delight of seeing gradually dispersed the clouds which veil the knotty points of life, it is not to be compared with the second. It is in love that there is most light. I have climbed towards the gospel by means of speculation. Happy are those to whom it presents itself, not by the speculative side, which is only its profile, but its *full face*, as a quickening power of regeneration and love."

The recipient of the above letter spent two days under Vinet's roof. A short time afterwards Vinet wrote as follows:—

"Your letter to my wife has done us both good. It has been for us a new proof of the truth that it is only on the ground of Christian conviction that true heart intimacy is born. . . . God alone is the real centre of true friendship. It is in Him that it is fulfilled. Every union, however dear and sweet it may be, remains superficial so long as it is not steeped in this element. . . . Divine love can add itself to all forms of love, as the infinite blends with all hopes." . . .

It was not only upon his near neighbours that Vinet exercised this direct Christian influence which flows from soul to soul.<sup>1</sup> His articles in the *Semeur* had brought him into connection with more than one distinguished man, and in the letters he exchanged with them he did not dissimulate his secret thoughts. From this period dates his relations with Emile Souvestre, who was spending some time in Mulhouse. Souvestre made the first advances. Vinet replied in the following terms:—

*To E. Souvestre, April 1836.*

"In order to feel the true attraction of literary glory, we must understand by this expression the power of awakening in a thousand hearts the pure sentiments and noble desires that lie dormant. If the echo of a soul in many other souls is what one calls glory, it is almost a duty to seek it . . . it ought to be, at least, the sweetest recompense of talent, and the supreme delight of poetic labour. . . . What is admiration but sympathy carried to its highest degree, and appealing to that which is most intimate and precious in the treasures of the heart? I venture to count myself among the number of those who understand you *by the heart*. You have placed your talent at the service of moral truth. . . . You believe that morality will perish or revive with religious belief. To put this age on the track of such ideas, is to place it on the path of salvation. May it be given you to go farther still, to name this truth—keystone of all moral, social, and political truths—the grand dogma of reconciliation in Jesus Christ, which prepares the restoration of society by that of each individual."

About the same time Vinet received a letter signed by the name of Châteaubriand. After thanking him for his articles in the *Semeur*, M. de Châteaubriand adds,—

*"27th October 1836.*

"You have remarked a tone of sadness in my writings.

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

It is caused by the fact that, with the exception of religious truth, I have lost faith in everything on the earth. I no longer believe in politics, in literature, in renown, in human affection. . . . This long letter will prove the esteem with which your article has inspired me. I am all the more grateful for your praise, that it comes from a man whose literary judgment is inspired by the morality and the probity of religion."

To this letter Vinet replied as follows:—

*To M. de Châteaubriand, 1836.*

. . . "I rejoice to see your religious aspirations flourish on the ruin of your human hopes. . . . Your last words prove that the breath which dissipated the smoke has nourished and kindled the flame. . . . A generation of minds entirely devoted to Art and to Intellect appear to have only asked of you the fruits of genius. Give them something more. Bring before their eyes the faith you have preserved, the one hope that is never confounded. Prepare for the youth of this generation, which must grow old and lose its illusions, an indemnity for the system of opinions which change and decay. Use to this end the genius which God has sheltered from the ravages of time. Your utterance is powerful to communicate 'the sorrow of the world which worketh death:' will it be less powerful to teach the 'godly sorrow which worketh life,' and out of which springs a holy joy, a celestial flower on a crown of thorns?"

## CHAPTER XIX.

*New Edition of the "Discourses"—Essays on Moral  
Philosophy—Call to Lausanne.*

IN the year 1836, Vinet published a second edition of his *Discourses on some Religious Subjects*. It contained a new preface, in which, after pleading in favour of sincerity and condemning conventional expressions, Vinet goes on to say :—

"Every soul believes in something that is true, even if it were only in its own existence. Every true belief is on the road to the gospel, and it must be taken for the point of departure. I cannot think that those have been in error who have sought to bring into relief the rational side of Christianity. Reason, that is to say, *the nature of things*, will always be the criterion of truth and the fulcrum of belief. The truth which is outside of ourselves measures and compares itself to the truth which is in us—to this intellectual conscience which, as well as the moral conscience, is invested with sovereignty—in a word, to Reason. On one point alone does Reason abdicate. It refuses to explain or to construct *à priori* the capital facts of Christianity. These it abandons to the heart, who takes possession of and vivifies them. Thus the essential opposition which is said to exist between Reason and Faith is not real. They are two powers reigning over two different domains. Those who declare that Christianity is only Faith, and those who pretend that it is only Reason, are equally mistaken; *it is both*: it dominates the region of thought as well as that of sentiment."

It would be impossible to be more clearly in contradiction with the aim proposed in the first edition, where

we have seen Reason condemned to a purely formal rôle, and permitted to exercise her function only within certain authorized and recognised limits.

Now we see Reason taking its place frankly as the "intellectual conscience, which, as well as the moral conscience, is invested with sovereign rights." According to his former point of view, Reason was only permitted to ascertain the dates and authorship of the sacred books. According to the latter, Reason became the criterion of the truths which they contained.

To use an illustration, the formal use of Reason may be compared to the action of a man who, on receiving a chest of merchandise, assures himself that the articles bear the trade-mark of the factory whence they come; while the legitimate use of Reason may be compared to the action of one who touches, tastes, and analyses the contents in order to ascertain their genuine worth.

The third edition is still more significant. It contains two remarkable discourses, entitled "Study without Limit," designed to point out the danger of the very tendency to which Vinet had given way for a moment.<sup>1</sup> At the very time when, more than ever, he was applying intelligence to religion, he takes care to remind us, not only that this application does not bring us to the truth, that is to say, to the life, but that it tends to remove us from it. How can we doubt that Vinet feared to have approached too close to the abyss when we read:—

"The religion of the soul was not a stranger to the man whose first steps succumbed to this danger. It is scarcely possible not to admit that at first he only saw in religion an object of philosophical speculation; his first design, doubtless, was to appropriate it to his soul, and to submit to it his life; but this impression was superficial and fugitive; the mind, keenly attracted, flung itself on this

<sup>1</sup> Astié.



rich prey, and turned it entirely to his profit. This inclination became dominant and tyrannical. That which had been destined to be the aliment of the soul became the pasture of the intelligence. Each of the gains of the intelligence was a loss for the soul. This man, having contracted the habit of seizing everything by the intellectual side, became by degrees incapable of seizing them under any other aspect. *The idea appearing before the reality, interposed itself as an obstacle between the fact and his soul.* Soon nothing was left of all these facts but phantoms which represented faithfully the surface of the outline, but did not contain the substance. He felt the evil, and became anxious: he tried to make of religion, so long his study, an affair, and *his* affair. He sought to place himself under the action and the dominion of truth, but by force of habit his mind came each time to substitute itself for his conscience. Seeking in vain a religion in this system, he found nothing but a system in this religion."

"No one was better prepared than Vinet to meet this danger. But the fear seems to have pursued him all his life, as Pascal was pursued by the remembrance of the accident of the Bridge of Neuilly. The entry in his diary of 12th July 1836, which we have already noted ('Am I writer or preacher? Do I compose with the necessary seriousness?'), was written on the same day that he was working at his sermon on 'Study without Limit.'

"The method he had employed in the Discourses of seizing Christianity by the intellectual side, entangled him in a labyrinth of difficulties. When he spoke of 'descending into his Tartarus,' and of 'climbing to the gospel' by means of speculation, he adds, '*I am not speaking by hearsay, I have experienced it.*'"<sup>1</sup>

During this period the philosophic vein undoubtedly predominated. Already, in 1834, we have seen Vinet occupied with Fichte and Kant. Later he collected some of his articles, and the result was a volume, entitled

<sup>1</sup> Astié.

*Essays on Moral Philosophy.* With the exception of a few literary pieces at the end of the volume, it is with speculative morality that this volume is concerned. "Never has Vinet skirted so closely the borderland of metaphysics."

The inscriptions on the title-page serve as keynotes to the book:—

"Religion ought to be all or nothing in life."—*MME. DE STAËL.*

"One does not show one's greatness by being in extremities, but by touching both extremities at the same time, and filling up the space between."—*PASCAL.*

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him."—*EPH. i. 10.*

Vinet reviews rapidly the principal systems of modern philosophy, and attempts to show that it is engaged on a path that has no outlet. "It has tried all the roads, but has never arrived at the end it had in view. It has never seized the unity of the universe and of human life. Logic has pushed it to the edge of a precipice, before which, in spite of its audacity, it has been obliged to draw back; because, if human thought is devoured by a thirst for eternal unity, it will never consent to satisfy it by self-mutilation. These useless efforts have engendered a great lassitude, and from it is born a new philosophy, which is nothing else than negation.

"It is called eclecticism, and it professes that in philosophy and morality truth is everywhere and nowhere; that every doctrine conceals a part; that no doctrine contains it entirely; and that science, instead of espousing one of the parties who dispute opinion, ought to come between them as a safe mediator, giving to each his part, and exacting consciousness from each in order to bring them all together, if it be possible, towards a common point, which is *truth*."<sup>1</sup>

"Vinet has no difficulty in showing that this pretended

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

'mediator' is not entitled to the high functions which it claims for itself,—that it needs a principle in order to make a choice;—that this principle ought to be a philosophy, so that the new science which promises such great results makes its appearance in a vicious circle. . . . But eclecticism has had the merit to see that truth lies in the conciliation of contrary principles. If it be a question of God, it must be infinite, and at the same time personal. If it be a question of morality, justice and mercy are opposed one to the other with equal rights, one asking for pardon, the other for punishment. There is the same conflict between the principle of obedience and that of liberty, between individualism and socialism, between good and evil, life and death, being and non-existence. What is to be done in the midst of these difficulties? Proclaim a divorce between theory and practice? Many have done so. 'I seek,' says a certain philosopher, 'the seeds of an enigma that necessity solves each day.' I have tried, so far as I am concerned, to be logical, and I have reason to be so. I shall linger, perhaps, on the way, and perhaps I shall never arrive at the goal. But you who have to live do not linger. *Live*. Act as if you had principles. Find in your facts the unity which you do not find in your ideas. Inconsistency is the first condition of practical wisdom."<sup>1</sup>

"What an avowal!" cries Vinet. "Action separated from ideas. Practical truth to be purchased at the price of the exclusion of speculative truth. Logic commanded to stand aside in order to make room for life. Let there be no equivocation, that which is asked is not only the recognition of certain limits in the domain of thought—a recognition which is necessary and inevitable in all systems,—but that which is asked is: a *practical lie*, the sacrifice of convictions, a scandalous divorce between thought and life. And who is it that asks this? All the world.

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

And who are they who are opposed? . . . They are Christians. . . . Christians who know that this gospel contains the reduction in principle and in fact of *all the dualities* which torment the mind. . . . Christians who know that in the divine and admirable gospel one key opens all the doors. . . . A sole fact solves all problems . . . they give way to the irresistible power of one word. This word is a name, Jesus Christ. This word is an image, the cross. This word is a fact, the expiation. This word reorganizes the mind of the world. It is virtually the perfection of order. By it the dualities are reduced, the mediator has conquered, and unity is triumphant.

"To show that Jesus Christ is the mediator of disunited and conflicting thoughts, that He has brought to the world peace and intelligence as well as heart and life; such is the thought which dominates the composition of the Essays."

Compared to the Discourses, the Essays are remarkable for the vigour and depth of their convictions.

"One needs to go deeper," he had said, with reference to his Discourses.

Was this the profound book which was to meet the need of the age? Vinet does not advance such a claim.

"We shall rejoice," he says, "if this essay were to arouse the right man for the work. If some Christian philosopher, recounting from a scientific point of view his personal experiences and his discoveries, were to expose to the eyes of sages the universal mediation of Christ, interposing in the world of thought and of conscience between contradictory truths, establishing harmony between ideas and facts, teaching by action, creating in order to instruct, completing human thought in completing human existence, giving us a new light in giving a new eye, bringing to the world a life which is a light, bringing peace by the same power and by the same act to the heart and the intelligence. Here is the miracle whose different faces must be exposed to the light. The task is great and laborious, but interesting, and worthy of the forces of a superior mind. 'Dignus, vindice nodus.'"

Early in 1837 the chair of Practical Theology at the Academy of Lausanne became vacant. In the opinion of his friends this was Vinet's true place, and they began to sound his wishes with regard to the call which could not fail to be addressed to him.

His diary again permits us to follow him step by step.

"*January 1837.*—I have been obliged to miss my lesson at 8, and to give the following one in my room. . . . Confined to my bed, I have turned over in my mind an article on the question—'Can Christianity come to an end?'

"M. Nisard demands from new doctrines the effects which are produced by Christianity. But one does not make truth, one *receives* it. The moral force of Christianity is attached to extra-natural data that cannot be invented.

"A letter from M. Scholl concerning the post at Lausanne. . . . The cold has finished me, and I have descended to my former level, discouraged and inert. A fine time for making plans.

"*February 15th.*—Began with a languid hand my essay on the Reduction of Dualities.

"Overwhelmed to realize how little religion is incorporated in my life—the small use I make of it in the functions of my place. Bitterness, harsh judgment, rejoicing in iniquity, the tongue distilling blame.

"'Eternal, guard my lips.'

"Prayer is the beginning of truth.

"Those who consider themselves too spiritual to need rule and method in devotion are in great error."

*To M. Forel, March.*

"Twenty years have made me man, husband, father, Christian—all that I am! Twenty such years have attached me to the soil of Basle. . . . My heart is wrung at the idea of leaving this town, where I had hoped to die. . . . If I decide to go to Lausanne, it will be because my life grows feeble by the nature of my functions and by my isolation. Solitude is sweet, but this sweetness alarms

me. I need more responsibility, more frequent contact with men and things, more intellectual and moral perils. . . . I need to be tied by positive duties, by daily occupations, by Christian habits of thought and life. This need cries aloud in anguish. The exercise of the ministry would seem to reply to it, *but I am far below the ministry*; it is too much for me, and for this reason I would refuse a third time the tempting post of Frankfort."

Other considerations weighed in the balance against Lausanne. The change would involve a pecuniary sacrifice; and the weak health of his children caused Vinet to be anxious to make a suitable provision for them.

"27th March.—Always tossed hither and thither, never knowing what to do—always incapable of consulting positively the Great Counsellor.

"30th March.—I have said 'Yes.' This day has fixed my fate."

*To M. Forel.*

"Here, dear friend, is an important moment in my life. I hope that I do not profane it. I have the feeling of writing all this before God! I hope that He does not see in the depths of my soul anything different from that which I put on paper. It seems to me that—with a bad grace, it is true—I wish to do His will. May I see nothing but His will, and in following may I learn to love it. The career which opens before me does not appear as it might have done—large, luminous, and smiling. It is a narrow passage through which I must pass hurriedly. A few days and everything will be finished. But may these days be well filled, useful to me and to others, and then raise your eyes for me to heaven."

Before entering upon his new functions, Vinet's health obliged him to take a long holiday. He was advised to try the effect of the whey baths at Gais, Canton of Appenzell.

The weather was cold and gloomy, and there was "only one ray of light" for Vinet in this "monotonous horizon." This was the fact that he found himself in the summer residence of the Scherer family, where his wife's youth had been spent.

*To Mme. Vinet, 21st July 1837.*

"If I have said nothing yet about St. Gall, it is because I have reserved this subject for a 'bonne bouche.' You would never believe, and I would never have foreseen, all the emotion I have felt in this house, the home of your young years. I cannot imagine any greater pleasure than that of passing some hours in St. Gall, and of going with you to 'Castel.' Do not talk of sacrifice and of 'inconvenience.' I *will* have this happiness, and understand that it is above all the happiness of being the witness of your delight."

We must find space for an amusing letter describing a carriage accident.

"L'essuie crie et se rompt : l'intrepide Hippolyte  
Voit voler en éclats tout son char fracassé."

"The intrepid Hippolyte in question is my coachman. As for me, if I was not frightened, it is, I think, because I have not had time for anything but to allow myself to follow serenely the quarter of a circle which one involuntarily describes in such cases."

Then comes a *P.S.* which is eminently characteristic.

"I fear that in my love of jesting I have wronged my poor coachman. He is a good fellow, and I am thoroughly satisfied with him."

At last the moment came for Vinet to leave Basle. It was a painful wrench. He left behind him his sister, many dear friends, and the memories of twenty of the finest years of his life. What had Lausanne to offer in exchange?

**PART THIRD.**

**1837-1847.**



CHAPTER XX.<sup>1</sup>

*Vinet's Inaugural Address — Sainte-Beuve — Transition Period — Vinet regrets the "Orthodox Rationalism" of the Revival.*

THE 1st November 1837 was a festival day for the Academy of Lausanne.

An eager crowd pressed into the Hall, anxious to do honour to the heroes of the hour. These were Sainte-Beuve and Vinet.<sup>2</sup>

The former came to Lausanne to sketch under the form of a course of lectures the outline of his great work on Port-Royal. The inhabitants of Lausanne rejoiced to see easy and daily communications established between Paris and the quiet town on the shores of Lake Lemman.

Vinet, the lost child brought back to the Fatherland, was the cynosure of all eyes. In spite of the traces of

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

<sup>2</sup> In a letter of Professor Chappuis' we find the following interesting description of Sainte-Beuve:—

"Sainte-Beuve is giving us a course of lectures on the history of Port-Royal. Everybody has been taken by surprise. The public expected a type of Parisian—lively, thoughtless, elegant, witty, gallant, and—bumptious: a kind of Alexander Dumas, who would amuse by relating risky anecdotes, and who would indulge in keen Voltairian satire on the subject of devotion and superstition. Instead of this, the rector presents to us a little man, bent, ugly, awkward, still young, but with the face of a wrinkled old man, and, above all, bald.

"It was still worse when he began to lecture: a kind of recitative, a 'sing-song,' which harmonized ill with the hopes we had formed of our Parisian. . . . And then, instead of the 'impressions' of Alexander Dumas, we have a solid, profound, well-prepared course of lectures. Instead of

suffering visible on his worn features, no one believed in this "weight of age" which he said "bowed down his heart." "In the midst of his doubts, his scruples, his sufferings, his languor of mind and of body, the Christian hero always reappeared rearing, as the Categorical Imperative, its lion's head. Had he not thrown down a challenge to all human wisdom in proclaiming the philosophy of Christianity? '*The dualities are reduced, the mediator is vanquished, unity triumphs.*' This language certainly did not express a timid conviction. It was this internal force, this elevation of thought, this energy of faith, which struck all who heard him. The religious and literary movement of the Canton of Vaud had already produced beautiful blossoms, but they were scattered. Unity and independence were wanting, as well as freedom from certain external influences. Men were looking for a rallying point, a centre, a guide. They believed it was to be found in Vinet.'<sup>1</sup>

Far from disappointing these high hopes, Vinet's opening address raised them still higher. It was a confession of faith.

"What," he asked, "has been the influence of the religious movement on preaching; and how, in its turn, jokes and scandalous stories, we hear theological arguments; and instead of piquant sallies, utterances of deep earnestness. Hence great disappointment in certain quarters. But every one is not disappointed. In the first place, the '*beau sexe*' are enchanted. Their zeal goes so far that there are a certain number of young girls who dream of founding a little Protestant Port-Royal. I ignore the rules, but I have my doubts as to whether absolute silence is imposed. . . . Sainte-Beuve's lessons are deeply serious. He is as theological as he is literary. Above all, he has taste and talent for psychological observation. Add that he is *Christian*, or, at all events, the friend of Christianity, which takes nothing from his merits, and that there is in his faith (still too literary, perhaps) a candour and a sincerity which make him lovable. I acknowledge that his delivery is heavy, that he sings half his lectures, and that he reads—deplorably. But his real merits must not be overlooked."

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

has preaching reacted on the religious movement? The Revival was an effort to revert to the source of religion, and to a more strict application of its principles to human life. . . . But we refuse to accredit this movement with the character of novelty, which would be a cause of suspicion. Jesus Christ has promised to be with His Church till the 'end of the world.' Jesus Christ cannot be divided. He is Truth, and this Truth is one and undivided, and none of its elements can perish. . . . If Christ can be divided in theory, *i.e.* in formulæ and words, which are outside of man, He can never be divided in sentiment, which is man himself."

Vinet recognises that in the Church of Vaud "Jesus Christ has never been enveloped in the grave-clothes of neglect, nor clad derisively in the mantle of Socrates;" and he yields homage to the venerable voice of the Doyen Curtat, who "recommended the love of Christ as the first condition and only form of the evangelical ministry."

At the same time, Vinet recognises a progress on the past, "a movement of reform and of renovation." This is—

"neither the place nor the moment to mention the faults of the human side of the work. Let us only see in it the touch of the Master's hand . . . let us recognise that the need of a severe unity has been felt by many who formerly gained nothing from religion. Christianity, jealous of consistency, has caused its presence to be felt in all the spheres of human existence.

"It is by means of preaching that the religious movement has spread. . . . But here again is nothing that is absolutely new—nothing which did not already exist as an exception. It is merely the exception becoming the rule. . . . If individuality has suffered loss, it is our fault, and not that of religion."

Vinet criticizes with great delicacy some of the prevailing abuses. The meditation which tended to supplant the sermon was "the *least meditated* of discourses." A

certain familiarity tended to "lower the dignity of the word." But the principal criticism was expressed in the wish that, following the example of their Master, "the disciples of Jesus Christ should be *perfectly human*."

"Truth claims to become incorporated in the personality of each man. It makes of James, Peter, and John, St. James, St. Peter, and St. John; but in adding sanctity, it does not take away their humanity. . . . In becoming more biblical, the teaching of the pulpit has appeared more logical, more harmonious, and more complete. Each truth calls another truth to be its complement or support, until the chain has joined the infinity of our misery to the infinite wisdom of divine love. . . . It is true that this joy, which ought to penetrate the soul, has turned too much in the direction of intelligence, and on account of the intimate connection between the different parts of our moral being one has sometimes mistaken the seat of this joy. It may be that a religion perfectly connected (because it is perfectly true) may have enchanted some minds because it has taken the form of a complete syllogism. It may be that in the satisfaction of being able to reason out religion, one has reasoned on it rather too much . . . it may be that a little of this *rationalism so harshly attacked by orthodoxy* is one of the characteristics of the new orthodoxy; but this abuse does not outweigh the incontestable merit of a more systematic instruction."

The question of the connection between Faith and Reason had long preoccupied Vinet.

"The Word," he wrote in his diary, "is implicitly Truth and Reason, and nothing (as regards dogmatic exactitude) would hinder the substitution of one of the two latter terms for the first. Jesus Christ is Reason, Truth, Natural Light made substantial and personal."

This thought was developed in the opening address:—

"The present epoch demands that the rational side of Christianity, i.e. its philosophy, should be brought into relief,

and that it should become, as well as a moral reformation, the instrument of an intellectual renaissance. . . . There has certainly never been an epoch when the gospel could have dispensed with the necessity of being reasonable. One may, in a sublime sense, even call Reason that which in all times has determined minds to submit to the gospel. But the equilibrium which is asked to-day has not always been claimed so distinctly. The conscience and the heart have often been charged to be reasonable *in the place of Reason, which had ceased to be so*, and all was clear and logical in the soul, while the mind was embarrassed and confused.

“The epoch in which we live seems to have taken for its device, ‘Let your obedience be reasonable.’ It does not ask so much the exposition of the external proofs of religion, as the demonstration of its internal coherence, and of the agreement of the whole with the things of the heart and of human affairs. It entreats Christianity to give an account of its philosophy. It is not a philosophy that it wishes to obtain *in exchange* for Christianity, but rather a philosophy that it wishes to receive from its hands. It is not only an intellectual spectacle craved by some ambitious minds; it is a satisfaction that it will share with the popular intelligence. That which it claims as an end, it also asks *as a means*, believing that Christianity thus taught would become for the people a keen stimulant to reflection, the most energetic means of intellectual development, and the source of all the true and healthy ideas on which it orders its life. . . . There is so close a connection between the Christian religion and humanity, that each ought to draw the other nearer—faith towards nature, and nature towards faith.

“When one speaks of the philosophy of Christianity, one appears to speak of something extraordinary—accessible only to a few minds; and yet, to say that Christianity is philosophical, is only to say in other terms that it is in accordance with itself and with our nature, that it is human, simple, consequent, and practical. Thus we cannot better bring out the philosophy of the gospel, nor better enter into the spirit of the times, nor better serve the cause

of the Revival, *than by causing to abound in sermons the morality which abounds in the gospel*. . . . Let the preacher examine under a wide aspect the book of God, he will everywhere find morality, sometimes completing doctrine, and sometimes completed by it: he will see two sides of the truth, not only in accordance with, but completing each other; and in his sermons he will show with equal care that morality is all dogma, and that dogma is all morality."

"The effect produced by Vinet's inaugural address was immense. It was spoken of as an event. The Canton of Vaud had been flooded by itinerant preachers from Geneva and from England, who compromised the holiness of their cause by narrow views and vulgar affectations.

"The Vaudois revival owed something to these exotic influences, and this caused suffering to many of the souls most deeply touched by the new teaching. On seeing Vinet afford the example of a simple, natural faith, and display *the grace of good sense*, more than one drooping heart took courage.

"It was an event, not only for the Canton of Vaud, but for the religious revival in general. If the Revival had encountered obstacles, it owed them, not only to indifference or to natural opposition, but also to the insufficiency of its principle. It was because it was not Christian enough, or, what comes to the same thing, *not human enough*. To humanize it, to reconcile it with science, with reason, and with art—such was the work to which the new professor was called."<sup>1</sup>

According to Professor Astić, we may distinguish three phases separating the Vinet of the second from the Vinet of the third period, upon which we are now entering. (1) He bewails his inability to accept the shibboleths of the ordinary pietist; (2) he submits to the inevitable and gives up the struggle; (3) and finally, he boldly

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

repudiates the theology which he had tried in vain to assimilate. . . . It was during this phase of transition that he passed through a deep spiritual conflict provoked by frequent doubts, leading him to unforeseen conclusions.

"Having first criticized severely, and then repudiated the theology of the Revival, Vinet attached himself more firmly than ever to the *gospel*."<sup>1</sup>

"The religious revival of our day," said Vinet, "is connected in some countries with a rigid and formal dogmatism, and people have been slow to perceive that such dogmatism proceeds from rationalism, or, at all events, that it leads easily to it, and that we are tempted to substitute the system of man for the plan of God, and to subordinate the work of God to the ideas of man. . . . Much of its vaunted result has been recognised to be artificial, much of its worth to be illusory, many of its conversions to be the evolution of the natural man. Finally, that which was taken to be a living principle has only left at the bottom of the crucible a kind of fervent logic, a mania of sequence, a party spirit tinged with asceticism. In a word, it has been verified even among the ignorant (for the ignorant have been subject to dogmatism) that many were only Christian in the same way that one is a disciple of Plato or of the Stagyrte."

Vinet accuses the Revival of having neglected morality and of giving pledges to intellectualism, in a word, to have been an "orthodox form of rationalism." His own views are clearly expressed in a letter addressed to M. Ulrich Göttinger:<sup>2</sup>—

"November 1837.

"To affirm or to deny the existence of God would be equally bold, and one would have to remain on this subject

<sup>1</sup> Astié.

<sup>2</sup> M. Ulrich Göttinger had raised the objection that, as he failed to discover perfect loving-kindness in God and perfect happiness in man, it was not possible for him to believe in a beneficent Creator.

eternally in suspense if conscience, the inward revelation of righteousness, the manifestation of moral order, had not asserted the empire of God in every soul of man.

"Duty and God: here are two correlative and indissoluble ideas. And when once this idea of God is apprehended under the attribute which makes its reality,—*the attribute of moral order*,—nothing can overturn or shake it. It is easier to accept the world such as it is, or even worse, than to deny moral order. . . . Why should we be scandalized to see evil endure *in part* after the coming of Christ, when we had made up our mind before His coming to see this same evil subsist in entirety? Why should we not subscribe, although with sadness, to all the conditions of the creation of a moral world—to liberty, which is the first of these conditions, and to all the consequences of liberty? . . . 'Wherefore this liberty?' one will ask. 'How can one have a moral world without liberty?' another will reply. How can one conceive God without a moral world, and how can one explain without the existence of God the sentiment of moral order in man, since this order or this attribute cannot be without a source, and this source is God? . . . I cling to this invincible idea of moral order! As an idea it gives me the notion of God, but afterwards realized in all its fulness, it has given us God Himself and not only His notion. . . . God has been fully manifested in Jesus Christ, the living and perfect type, the realization of moral order. When God thus revealed Himself, was that not enough? Can eyes and heart desire anything more than God Himself? Can anything essential be lacking when we see, when we possess Him? This is all that even the most skilful pleader can say. . . . For them, as for us, the problem remains, but God remains too, and that is enough."



## CHAPTER XXI.

*New Surroundings—Friendships : Erskine, Sainte-Beuve—  
Death of Daughter.*

1837-1838.

AMONG the motives which had decided Vinet to exchange Basle for Lausanne was the need of a position surrounded by greater moral and intellectual perils—the position, in a word, of a full-grown man. Under this head he found even more than he desired. From the moment of his arrival in Lausanne, Vinet became a doctor, a master in the Church. His influence upon the students was very great; yet, owing to his extreme delicacy of conscience, and to his respect for individual opinion, he kept himself from the temptation of exercising any pressure in the direction of his own views respecting the relations of Church and State.

"You can form no idea of the pleasure with which one listens to Vinet's lectures," writes one of his colleagues. "Solidity, depth, many-sidedness, elevation, piety, noble simplicity, enthusiasm—all these qualities are united in him. He is the type of the professor."

"Those who did not live in the Canton of Vaud from 1837 to 1845 could never imagine what joy it was for a numerous public to possess at last this remarkable man, and to see him draw towards Lausanne the eyes of Europe."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

From the first days of his arrival in Lausanne, Vinet's door was open to all who had need of his counsel or assistance. He was not one of those whose indiscreet zeal alarms the timid soul. The "How goes your soul?" of Malan was a phrase not to be found in his vocabulary. His respect for every living soul was only the supreme form of his love for truth. The "one thing needful" embraced for him the whole man. Every now and then Vinet sighs over the loss of time entailed by these visits.

"15th November 1837.

"My days are consumed by visits and by trivial nothings. Hardly any time is left for work, for meditation, for the inner life. Physically I suffer from all this."

This complaint recurs again and again. But we never meet with an impatient or a disparaging word, save perhaps the following rapid note:—

"Visit from — (a theological candidate), who came to ask me certain explanations of my opening address, in other words, to read *me* a lecture!"

A few days later, Vinet invited the youthful Timothy to dinner.

Vinet's table, where everything was simple but in good taste, was often furnished with distinguished guests: the poet Juste Olivier,<sup>1</sup> the critic Sainte-Beuve, the theologian S. Chappuis, and the future philosopher Charles Secrétan.<sup>2</sup> Every now and then some foreigner was numbered among the visitors, notably Thomas Erskine of Linlathen.

<sup>1</sup> Juste Olivier. Readers of *Amiel's Journal* will recognise the name of one of the freshest and most spontaneous singers of modern times.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Secrétan, Professor of Moral Law at the Academy of Lausanne, and Member of the Institute of France. The jubilee of this venerated teacher was celebrated in Lausanne, 1888.

*To his Sister.*

"They say that he is a great heretic," wrote Vinet, "but he is a very good Christian nevertheless."

When the illustrious Scotchman returned to his native land in 1839, after a sojourn of several months in Lausanne, Vinet and he had become friends for life.

Sainte-Beuve and Vinet spent long hours engaged in intimate conversation. A friend had taken care not to let Vinet ignore the fact that the public voice designated him to be the brilliant critic's director of conscience.

Vinet wrote in his Journal a few days later,—

"17th January 1838.—Yesterday I neglected from lack of courage, that is to say, from lack of love, the kind of pastorate that ——— conferred upon me."

Judging by other notes, it does not appear that he always neglected it. He laboured to this end with great earnestness,—among other means by a page of serious reflection on a novel, entitled *Madame de Pontivy*, which Sainte-Beuve had published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

Vinet ranked this work among the number of "caprices of worn-out souls whose lives had been spent in seeing and their sensibility in reflection." He reproaches the author for "exciting interest by an illegitimate affection which he surrounds by a false aureole of virtue and innocence."

Vinet communicated this criticism to Sainte-Beuve before its publication. We read in the Journal:—

"1st February 1838.—Visit from MM. Sainte-Beuve and Olivier. The former brought a reply to my communication respecting *Mme. de Pontivy*. This reply has greatly touched me."

Later we read,—

“Visit from M. Sainte-Beuve, who has allowed me to read in his heart.”<sup>1</sup>

The year 1838 was a year of trial and suffering to Vinet. The malady from which his son Auguste had suffered during several years now assumed the character of epilepsy, and the fits became more and more frequent. His daughter Stéphanie continued to linger rather than to live, and it soon became evident that her lungs were seriously affected. She was sent to Veytaux, to her maternal grandparents, in order to breathe a milder air. But her condition grew daily worse.

“My very dear child,” wrote Vinet, “it is a great privation to be detained far from you, not to be able to embrace you—to console you when you suffer—to show you a part of the tenderness of which my heart is full. I pray God to soften your sufferings, to make you submissive to His will, and to persuade you that He loves you more than father and mother, to teach you to make of this love, your treasure and your all. . . . Yes, God loves you when He makes you suffer. Unite your heart to one who hath suffered for you. Fix your eyes on the tender consoling face of Jesus Christ. . . . I embrace you tenderly. Your father.”

As soon as circumstances permitted them to do so, the father and mother hastened to the bedside of the suffering child. But all hope had disappeared.

<sup>1</sup> In the last edition of Sainte-Beuve's *Port-Royal* we find the following note respecting the sojourn of the illustrious critic in Lausanne :—

“The great, the incomparable moral profit which I gained from the neighbourhood of M. Vinet, and from my sojourn in the good country of Vaud, was the better understanding, by means of living examples of spiritual Christianity, of that which in every communion constitutes a faithful disciple of the Master.

“‘To be of the School of Christ.’ I learned to know what is meant by these words, and the noble meaning which they convey.”

## DIARY.

"Till now God has spared our child the anguish of great physical suffering. This excessive weakness is indeed a form of suffering, and the more it increases the more patience becomes difficult, but of this our dear child has a great store." . . .

Then comes this simple entry,—

"19th April 1838.—After a night of anguish, our dear child fell sweetly asleep in the arms of her mother at twenty minutes past seven."

On the same day, Vinet wrote to his friend,—

"I write to announce to you the deliverance from suffering of our dear child. . . . In proportion as the physical anguish augmented, the peace augmented too, and this peace became joy. In the midst of her sufferings the child said she was perfectly happy, because she suffered for God. We have been abundantly blessed in her. She has taught us more in her humble simplicity than either myself or any other pastor could have taught her. There is not a day that has not brought her some new grace; and such was her inner peace, that until the last moment her preoccupation was for those whom she loved." . . .

On the anniversary of his child's death, Vinet poured out his soul in a hymn, which shows how he sought to profit by the trial, and to bear it in a Christian spirit.

" Pourquoi reprendre,  
O Père tendre,  
Les biens dont tu m'as couronné ?  
Ce qu'en offrandes,  
Tu redemandes,  
Pourquoi donc l'avais-tu donné ? "

The hymn ends with the touching words,—

“ Tu peux reprendre,  
O Père tendre,  
Les biens dont tu m’as couronné.  
Ce qu’en offrandes,  
Tu redemandes,  
Je sais pourquoi tu l’as donné  
Et le secret de tes œuvres si grandes,  
J’explique à mon esprit borné.”

Nevertheless, the entries in his diary denote the anguish of a bereaved heart,—

“ 15th October.—The remembrance of our dear child, and the bitter regret to have done so little for her happiness, have filled my heart to bursting. We have found relief, her mother and I, in tears.”

*To his Sister, November 1838.*

“ It seems to me that our mourning has only just begun. Oh for an hour, one hour only, of her dear presence,—one hour in which to lavish upon her those marks of tenderness of which I have been too miserly ! I am not strong enough to bear the weight of this thought, and when it seizes me, there are no words to express all that I feel.”

Years afterwards, Vinet said to a friend,—

“ To-day I learned the marriage of a companion of my Stéphanie with one of my old pupils ; and I do not know why, but I wept for a couple of hours. I was not really sorrowful, I knew that my daughter was wedded to a fairer spouse, and I blessed God that she was happy ; and yet my tears would not cease.”

## CHAPTER XXII.

*Doubts—Letter to Pastor Scholl—Sense of unfitness for his Work—Baths of Lavey—Extracts from Letters and Journal.*

1838.

SCARCELY arrived in Lausanne, Vinet found himself caught in the complicated machinery of ecclesiastical reform. He was thoroughly unfit for the task; for not only was his frame racked by physical suffering and his heart torn by his recent cruel bereavement, but his mind was also painfully exercised by doubts respecting his vocation. He entertained at first the strange idea of refusing the emoluments attached to his office. This idea, which made his wife "shudder," and with good reason, was ardently combated by his friends, who induced him to content himself with refusing to receive anything above the strict sum allotted to his colleagues. But the pecuniary difficulty set aside, his doubts did not diminish, and these are best revealed in a letter<sup>1</sup> which he addressed to his friend the pastor Scholl, just fifteen days after his child's death. This letter marks a date in the history of Vinet, and casts a vivid light upon his moral character. It proves also that theological doubts can exist side by side with an intensely religious inner life. Many of his preceding letters had disclosed the fact

<sup>1</sup> From "An episode little known in the life of Vinet," in *Chrétien Evangélique*, H. Lecoultré.

that he felt keenly the thorns of his official position, and the entries in his Diary prove that he passed through a period of profound discouragement. The reader must never lose sight of the fact that the state of Vinet's health seriously affected his mind, and that his spiritual state was greatly influenced by his bodily sufferings.

*To Professor Scholl, May 1838.*

. . . "I feel that I have not insisted enough upon the fact which is the most serious. In the solemn moment in which I found myself face to face with death, the *realities* of which I have so long handled the *ideas*, were no more present to me than if they did not exist; it was a perfect vacuum, a darkness which could be felt.

"It was not one of those passing obscurities which the faith of the most fervent of believers is sometimes called to endure—my terror was without surprise. I realized that, only possessing an intellectual faith, I could not hope to find the treasure of the faith of the heart. I will not say that my heart has never been touched and interested, but the verity of salvation by grace has never been a property of my being. And this is so sorrowfully true, that after seeing the joy this belief spreads in the heart and in the discourse of Christians, I have felt myself in the presence of a strange phenomenon, which did not cease to haunt me. . . . I must add, that I believe I have been preserved from the sin of hypocrisy. I do not know but that enthusiasm, emotion, and admiration have not sometimes borne my words beyond the habitual condition of my soul; but, as a rule, I have sought to appear as I really am, and even to be known to my disadvantage."

A few days later, Vinet writes again to the same address:—

*"4th May 1838.*

"Dated from the garden, where I should greatly like to see you, and from my knees, which serve me badly for a desk.

"This is the question I want you to solve: not only to



know what is to be thought and hoped of *me* as an individual, but to know if a man is fit to be professor of theology who—

“(1.) Has come without a true sense of a vocation, only seeking greater convenience, and has not since felt symptoms of any other vocation.

“(2.) Who has recognised that he is unconverted, believing by the mind the one thing needful, and not living it; who is in all things, good as well as bad, *the natural man*, laden with particular sins, which oblige him to think himself lost when all other men appear to be in safety; yet not being driven by this conviction to seize the anchor of salvation and to rejoice in it. Do you wish to understand what I am, and to understand at the same time that I have always been unconverted, and that, nevertheless, I have been sincere (at least that I have wished to be so). Take in my essays the criticism of Jocelyn;<sup>1</sup> you will recognise me in all I say of the two concentric souls.

“(3.) Who has on many points, more or less serious, and notably on the inspiration of Scripture, extremely heterodox views, which become still more so in proportion as I study the Scripture with more independence, candour, and freedom from prejudice. In my present position an

<sup>1</sup> “In subjects that are touching or pathetic, that which one calls imagination is in reality *a second soul*,—a soul in some sort exterior and concentric to the first, or, if you like, something less than the soul and something more than the imagination; soul of the poet and not of the man, a soul that is irresponsible, a soul that does not count in the appreciation of the moral being, and whose value does not always represent with exactitude the nature and the value of the true soul. That which passes, then, is *not life*, and yet it is more than a simple idea. This soul is moved, touched; it weeps, it loves; it is so near to us that it seems to be ourselves. And yet there is a point, there comes a moment, when the distinction, the independence of the two souls is ascertained, when one recognises in which of the two resides the human reality, when one refuses to honour the engagements of the other, and when we ask ourselves with moanings and lamentations if these emotions, which brought tears to the eyes, were the emotions of a stranger, of a third person, whom, by an inconceivable illusion, we have identified with ourselves.

“Let us seek to distinguish between the second soul and the first; between the poet and the man, between poetry and life.”

obstinate reticence on this or that point would be beyond endurance in the long run, and besides, in principle, it would be cowardly and disloyal. The profession of my heresies would not be in itself an evil, it would even be a duty if I were able to build on my own ruins, and if I were not fearful of causing trouble and fruitless anguish to young minds. I have the conviction, but I have neither the science nor the moral and physical force necessary to enter the lists.

"Is it not horribly corrupting and fatal to preserve a false position? As to having accepted it, that is not so astonishing. Independent as I then was, and holding a lay position, I had allowed my ideas to form after the observation of facts. As I did not force my mind to believe such and such things because 'they' believe them, I enjoyed peace of mind. My error arises from not having calculated the difference between the position that I was leaving and that which I was going to occupy. My fault, above all, is not to have seen that in my spiritual state I could be neither pastor nor professor. My folly was to have thought that because my decision involved many sacrifices, this fact announced a vocation.

"To-day, as you know, no sacrifice would bar the return to truth and the rescue of my soul, which dissimulation (I do not say *simulation*, but that will come) fatigues, corrupts, and destroys.

"I hope that I shall not again be obliged to inflict this sorrowful subject upon you. If you come to Veytaux we will speak of other things. I am still weak and incapable; but this lovely weather, this beautiful sky, and remembrances that are sorrowful but tender, have softened me, and you will find me less ill-disposed than when you left me the other day. Farewell, dearest and best of friends."

In his reply Scholl exhorted Vinet to take courage, and to go on with his work, maintaining that his very scruples were the "fruits of the Spirit of God," and proved that his soul was "not a stranger to the regenerating action of divine grace."

Whether this answer satisfied Vinet's scruples we have no means of discovering. The curtain must fall upon this scene of conflict. But it has already been lifted high enough for us to witness the anguish of a soul whose one aim was to be "absolutely sincere."

Towards the middle of May, Vinet endeavoured to resume his lessons, and he continued them, although always suffering, until the summer vacation, when the doctors sent him to the baths of Lavey. His letters to his wife permit us to follow the progress of those struggles and of those emotions which make up the true history of a life.

"That which I most lack is a strong intellectual interest. Reading satisfies me less than ever. I recognise the value of a book by its power of forcing me to think or to compose on the idea to which it has given rise in my brain. But the habit is formed, and I shall go on devouring books. Only I shall no longer call it work, except when my reading becomes a positive study."

As usual, Vinet bewails his lack of Christian graces. He compares himself with "a young Frenchman, who, seated by the side of a childish old man, replied with patience to his foolish questions. When I expressed my admiration, he answered: 'My father is seventy-four, and he is in the same condition. I should be happy to know that young people treated him with consideration and indulgence.'"

"I have just come back from the spring. The weather is splendid. There are beauties here of which the sight of our lake can give no idea. I thought much of our dear child, whose eyes, closed for ever on these sights, are open to behold those which are more beautiful. My God, how sweet it would be to see her for a moment, to hear again the sound of her voice! What sweetness taken from our life, from yours above all! Oh, as for me, it is only too

just. I am not worthy of the felicity God has bestowed on me. I submit myself, but with a broken heart. But for you, I *cannot* accept it.

"10th August. — This morning, after inquiring for Auguste with much interest, M. — asked suddenly: 'Does he know the Lord?' I hardly know how to reply to such questions. I do not exactly know the value of the terms. I might perhaps reply 'Yes,' when, according to M. —, I ought to have said 'No.' In any case, it seems to me that these questions ought to be put under another form; and, first of all, that they ought not to be formulated in such a way as to demand a positive 'Yes' or 'No.' But these limitations are not in accordance with certain leading views."

Vinet reproaches himself for not having raised his voice more promptly against the "hard thoughtlessness of a fine lady" who had driven away some poor musicians, forgetting that "her displeasure in listening to bad music was not so bad as the hunger the poor musicians would have to endure."

"Speaking generally, I reproach myself for showing *too much tolerance* for certain persons. To love a fictitious peace is a veritable cowardice. La Fontaine says somewhere: 'It is foolish to be kind *to the weak*.' He might have added: 'To be kind *to the wicked is wicked*.' (The affair of to-day was not wicked, but thoughtless.)

"It seems to me that a noble need of impartiality almost leads M. Guizot to be partial. For fear of not seeing enough good in Catholicism, I find that he sees too much. How came it to escape him that 'Catholicism is the cradle of the Christian Church,' or some such phrase? That which is as old as the Christian Church is—Christianity, and nothing else. It is true that Protestantism *as a fact* is of the sixteenth century; but, *as a principle*, it is without date. If its principle be false, it is of no time. If true, it belongs to every age."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

*New Ecclesiastical Law—Vinet's Speeches—Abolition of Helvetic Confession—Jury of Discipline—Vinet's Protest.*

1838–1839.

RETURNED to Lausanne, Vinet assisted at the last days of the old Academy and the inauguration of the new; but not without sorrowful presentiments. The Constitution of 1831 had fixed the term of ten years for the revision of the laws, which dated from the time of the Bernese dominion; and among these figured ecclesiastical law. The Government considered that the moment had come to examine also the new law relating to the organization of the Academy itself.

“*September 1838.*—Lying awake in the night I thought of my academic future, and I foresaw certain disagreeable things capable of embittering me, because the very thought of them embitters me already. There is no peace save in casting oneself upon God, and placing oneself entirely under His shadow.”

According to the new scheme, the Academy was to be considered as a new establishment, which permitted the Government to make changes in the teaching body at will. Vinet had not at first grasped the full import of this veiled *coup d'état*, but its meaning was made plain to him when it touched the question of persons whom he knew and loved. The fabulist J. Porchat, known in England as the

author of the touching story, *Three Months under the Snow*, and several of his colleagues, were dismissed, and for a moment the fate of Juste Olivier trembled in the balance.

The question of the reorganization of the National Church agitated the public mind. Vinet published a short essay, in which he suggested the formation of parochial councils, composed of professors of theology, of pastors, and of laymen.

Shortly after, Vinet was named delegate by the "class" of Lausanne and Vevay. (The Vaudois clergy were divided into four groups or classes.)

"It would have been a great comfort not to have been named," he wrote in his Diary. Later he added, significantly, "I am anxious about what our associations will do, and still more about what they will be."

The approach of the opening of the debates filled Vinet with a kind of terror. Again and again we read in his Diary such entries as,—

"Discussion on union of Church and State. I spoke very badly. I am afraid that I appeared unfaithful to my principles respecting the independence of the Church."

In a word, Vinet was an *opportunist*, and he was thus forced to struggle at times against the logical application of his own ideas.

Later, Vinet pronounced an impressive discourse on the question, "By whom shall the Church be governed?" Whilst claiming for the laity a share in the government of the Church, he insisted that the people should learn to understand that there was a Church as well as a religion, both of divine institution: that there was a religious and an ecclesiastical life, and that the second was the complement of the first.

"I ask for the laity *that they may cease to exist*, and that the grand idea of a universal priesthood, proclaimed

by the gospel and restored by the Reformation, may reappear. I ask that our Church may enter into the interests of the great reformed Church, and that it may hasten the coming of that time when all Churches born of the Reformation may conclude in the face of heaven an offensive and defensive alliance in favour of the grand and vital principle of freedom of conscience. . . .

"I repeat the word ecclesiastic courageously, because we have a Church to preserve; yes, to save. The gospel never falters, although the Church may do so, and it is strange yet true that the progress of the gospel may in the long run be fatal to the Church by creating beyond its pale, a life, a movement, an activity, which have ceased to be found within it. If, in its bosom, all is monotonous and constrained, its members will seek life elsewhere. . . . This evangelical movement is not the only sign of the times, nor the only warning voice that resounds in our ears. We are warned also by this anarchy of ideas, by this unloosing of theories, by this chaos of the spiritual world. God is the Master, and His word is powerful. But this conviction does not dispense us from seeking the best ways of establishing the reign of God, and of causing the power of His word to appear. . . . The pastor preaches: the Church must preach too. Is this then not the moment when the religious life ought to develop itself, and to become, without losing its essential character, an ecclesiastical life?"

One of the delegates, after expressing the greatest admiration for Vinet's speech, invited him to "draw a practical conclusion." This conclusion, which could point to nothing short of the separation of Church and State, could hardly be uttered in the presence of such an assembly.

Vinet, taken unawares, stammered, excused himself, and withdrew.

On the following day he wrote:—

"*9th March.*—I am confined to my bed, ill with fever, and a prey to thoughts that give me no respite: fresh points of view crowd on me. . . .

"10th March.—Still harassed by the remembrance of our discussion. Another day in bed."

Vinet only reappeared once or twice at the meetings of the delegates. It must be confessed that he exercised little or no influence on the deliberations; but, according to M. Cart, this arose from the fact that "he towered too far above the heads of the majority of his colleagues."

In the first months of the year 1839, the Council of State submitted a project of ecclesiastical law to the consideration of the Grand Council. It met with a storm of opposition both from the ecclesiastical and the lay element. The latter demanded the abolition of the Helvetic Confession of Faith.

Vinet found himself once more forced to the battle front. He re-wrote eight times his article on "The Church and Confessions of Faith."

We have already seen his opinion with regard to the laity. We must now consider his attitude with regard to confessions of faith. He defends the Helvetic Confession of Faith simply because he is afraid of *what might replace it*. He fully recognised its imperfections, and asked for nothing better than to see it replaced by some verse from the Bible, such as "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." He proposed ironically the idea of this substitution, knowing that this simple test would be harder to accept than the whole of the Helvetic Confession of Faith. "There were only two alternatives—to replace the existing Confession by another symbol, or to abolish symbols altogether."

What would become of a Church without a creed?

"A creed," says Vinet, "represents very imperfectly, but at all events it does represent a Church. It is,



so to speak, its written expression. But take from the Church at once its self-government and its confession of faith, and what remains of the notion of a Church? Not the feeblest vestige. There only remains that which is purely monstrous, both from a logical and from a religious point of view—a few individuals without authority and without a rule imposing their belief and their rites on a people. Let it be the clergy or the Government, or the two together acting in a pretended concert, and without any umpire in case of dispute, it matters little. The Church not being represented, even by a symbol, no longer exists. Religion becomes purely and simply a department of the Government charged to satisfy in some way the religious needs of the masses. This is the goal towards which the abolition of a creed is leading us with giant strides. . . .

“The book which is called the Helvetic Creed is only the envelope of certain truths. It is to these truths, not to the book, that you are attached; but if the sword of the enemy pierces through the book to the most fundamental of truths; if the suppression of the book is the solemn disavowal of the truths that it contains,—the book must be defended, however human and imperfect it may be.”

In spite of this eloquent pleading, the cause was lost. The *Grand Council* adopted the views of the lay element, and the Helvetic Confession of Faith was abolished as the creed of the Vaudois Church, 17th January 1839.

No rule of faith was to be recognised in the National Church save the *Old and New Testaments*.

In an article which appeared under the title of “The Church and Confessions of Faith,” Vinet affirms that each sect seeks in the Bible the sole authority for his own ideas.

“A creed cannot be treated so cheaply. Its adherents must fully grasp its meaning. The new system (*i.e.* the abolition of creeds) means either *anarchy* or *tyranny*. Once abolish the Confession of Faith, and I can see nothing in your ecclesiastical government save a useless and ex-

pensive machinery, or the establishment of a despotism without limit. The Church, not being represented by its symbol, *no longer exists*. Religion becomes purely and simply a department of the Administration, a branch, if you like, of public instruction. The abolition of the creed is alike prejudicial to peace and to liberty. When this is suppressed nothing remains, and one must summon courage to say to a free people, 'You had a Church; we have suppressed it; nothing remains but parishes, buildings, black coats, and a budget to keep all going.'

M. Scherer points out that Vinet's attitude on this occasion is worthy of attention. The ground on which he places himself is that of relative truth. While retaining the ideas he had previously put forward on the evil of the union of Church and State, he accepts *the fact*, that is to say, the existence of the National Church. He does not defend the Helvetic Creed considered in itself, but he maintains the narrow connection existing between the creed and the Church. He declares that the Vaudois Church must have its creed in any case, and that creed for creed he prefers—

"that which is known to that which is unknown; that which is born of an historic and positive faith to that which in all probability will be only negative; that whose fundamental doctrines are found in accordance with *life* to that of dry indifference."<sup>1</sup>

Vinet understood perfectly that this discussion veiled the struggle between indifferentism or even incredulity and the Christian faith. He endeavoured to show that in abandoning the creed, the only point where consciences could unite would be in theism. As to the doctrines opposed to the Helvetic Confession, they did not, in the judgment of Vinet, contain "any germ of life."

<sup>1</sup> E. Scherer.

A significant event soon proved that the enemies of vital religion meant to profit by their recent triumph. They presented a petition requesting that the pulpit left vacant by the death of the Doyen Recou should be filled in such a way as to satisfy the needs of the nation. They complained that the sermons turned on "a narrow circle of dogmas borrowed from the most sombre mysticism," and that "they outraged the good sense of the listeners."

It was proposed that the Liturgy and the Catechism should be thoroughly revised.<sup>1</sup> The *Narrateur Religieux* raised its voice to declare that if the State tried to impose an atheistic formulary, *three hundred ministers would come forward to sign the separation of the Church and State*. The Church would not be replaced by congregations in imitation of the dissenters, but by a strongly organized Presbyterian Church. It is thus that the idea and even the name the *Free Church* first appeared.

The new scheme did not recognise a Church: it only recognised parishes governed by the Council of State, which thus became a kind of episcopal court.

"'L'état c'est moi,' said Louis XIV. But our 'bishops,'<sup>2</sup> will they dare to say, *We are the Church?*" asked the indignant *Narrateur*.

Many petitions were addressed to the Council. Among them was one from Vinet.

"You have suppressed the standard of religious instruction which has been recognised during the past three hundred years, and you oblige the Church to bear the impress of the successive doctrines and systems which may find favour in the eyes of the Council. It follows then that doctrines which are characteristic of the Chris-

<sup>1</sup> The Church of Geneva, which had long abolished the "*yoke of creeds*," rejoiced openly at the conduct of the *Council of Vaud*.

<sup>2</sup> Bishops, i.e. the State Council.

tian Church may at any time be altered or removed. You substitute the iron rule of the State for the free opinion of man, and this in a country where liberty is the watchword. Political power invades a domain which philosophy and religion alike interdict. Religion is to be subjected to the capricious tyranny of public opinion. Yet you cannot ignore the fact that no infraction of the immutable principles on which depend the progressive development of humanity has been left without evil consequences. Error in questions of this nature is fraught with danger and evil. I ask you, is it the province of political power *to prescribe the religion of the country?* The answer of your conscience leaves no room for doubt."

This petition was laid before the Grand Council during a sitting which was occupied with the question of "Discipline." The institution of a "Jury of Discipline" was the result.<sup>1</sup>

Vinet declared that the Grand Council had set the example of being revolutionary in Lausanne.

"The doors of the Church and the steps of the pulpit have been left open to rationalism under the name of liberty of doctrine. . . . It is not liberty which has been instituted, but the capricious tyranny of the majority. The system in virtue of which the pastors, on the accusations of the Government, can be dragged before a jury who would judge them according to their own personal opinions, is disloyal and anarchic."

The protest was not too strong. By the new law the Grand Council arrogated sovereign authority in spiritual matters, and the pastors were placed under the direct control of the municipalities.

The "class" of Lausanne and Vevay met in the great hall of the Cantonal Library. Vinet rose to move the

<sup>1</sup> The Jury of Discipline was composed of a certain number of ecclesiastics called to judge each particular case, but *not having the power to initiate proceedings*. This right was reserved to the civil power.

rejection of an address which, in the interests of peace, seemed to advise the adoption of the law.

“9th June 1840.

“As for me, I refuse to accept it. Besides the abolition of the Confession of Faith, which creates anarchy, a system of despotism has been erected by the institution of a Jury of Discipline. . . . I ask that a memoir may be addressed to the Grand Council requesting either that the Confession of Faith be restored or that the Jury of Doctrine be suppressed.”

The protest was prepared by Vinet, and submitted to the “class.” In it Vinet complained—

“that by the new law ministers were made the instruments of despotism and of persecution. It was persecution to judge and condemn *without law*, i.e. without a standard or rule of faith. The Scriptures could not serve as law in such circumstances, because, although in themselves they have but *one sense*, historically they have many. The Bible is Trinitarian for some; Unitarian, Arminian, or Calvinist for others. *A law by which an accused person may stand or fall can only have one sense.*”

*To his Sister.*

“Public affairs are in a bad way,” wrote Vinet to his sister. “The optimists are becoming pessimists. Every one is alarmed. It is a recommencement of the saturnalian revels celebrated on the ruins of the Confession of Faith. A kind of giddiness has seized the people. Nothing is held in a true balance. It is a stupid and furious reaction against light, against culture, against elevated sentiments. The Academy is threatened as well as the Church. Everything that is decent and worthy of respect is denounced as Methodism. One must be of the mob to find grace.”

Vinet recalled the fact that spiritual despotism had been at all times the principal passion of the clergy, and

he warned them not to accept a position which would put them in the way of temptation.

“Nothing is so intoxicating as arbitrary power; and in the hands of ecclesiastics nothing is so closely allied to power as persecution. . . . We are told to take comfort from the fact that the jury, if ever it is convoked, will only condemn the ‘heterodox.’ . . . What right have you to condemn them? How can there be ‘heterodoxy’ when the law no longer recognises ‘orthodoxy’? By ‘orthodoxy’ you understand the doctrines of the Helvetic Confession; but if these doctrines are the truth, you ought to respect them, and it is not respect, it is outrage, to make them triumph by force.”

At the time of the promulgation of the new ecclesiastical law, Vinet was a firm member of the National Church. He felt at home there, and he disapproved of the principle as well as of the fact of secession. As long as possible he maintained the hope that the Church would obtain a certain measure of independence. But the experience gained in 1838 exercised upon him a decisive influence. He asked himself if, after having pleaded so energetically the cause of the separation of Church and State, he did not run the risk of causing scandal by remaining a member of an Established Church. It was thus that he expressed his convictions on the subject in a work entitled *The Manifestation of Religious Convictions*.

CHAPTER XXIV.<sup>1</sup>

*Preparation of Memoir—Success—Life in Lausanne—  
Letters—Visits from Working Men—Illness—  
Marks of Sympathy—Social Life.*

1840–1841.

So far back as the year 1833, M. de Rochefoucauld, President of the Society of Christian Morality, proposed for competition the following subject:—

“Is it a duty for each man to try to form a conviction on matters of religion, and to bring all his words and actions into conformity with this conviction?”

The reply was too evident, and M. Stapfer, who was charged to revise the programme, changed the subject of competition to that of the “Manifestation of religious convictions.” The question thus stated changed its aspect. It seemed to address itself to Vinet.

“23rd April 1836.—I am much taken with the idea of working on the subject of the manifestation of religious convictions,” we read in his Diary.

The idea pursued him, and a year later we find him embarked on his subject.

His manifold occupations did not permit him to work at it regularly, for practical matters engrossed him as well as questions of principle.<sup>2</sup>

While he was pondering on the theoretical possibility

<sup>1</sup> See *Life of A. Vinet*, by E. Rambert.

<sup>2</sup> Rambert.

or impossibility of a legitimate and fruitful union between Church and State, he was trying in the Canton of Vaud to enable them to dwell harmoniously together, each fulfilling his proper mission. His desire for peace was at least equal to his thirst for sincerity. The ideas that had previously struck him had passed through his mind like lightning flashes rather than as irrevocable convictions. Without denying them, he appeared not to be attached to them with the same ardour of faith. It is evident that he only regarded the separation of Church and State as a far-off ideal. He was brought back to it as to the only possible solution by the logic of facts.

He says himself in his Diary,—

“I am urged with violence towards doctrines which I professed twelve years ago.”

Thus Vinet was brought reluctantly and in self-defence to see no other issue to the religious question than the absolute separation of Church and State. Before accepting this extreme solution, every other path had to be closed. It was in the conflict that his convictions were strengthened. The conclusion was forced upon him, but only after a combat full of tears and anguish. We are told that while writing his Memoir, he did not cease to repeat Luther's phrase, “*I cannot help it.*”<sup>1</sup>

The Diary shows us that it was in the beginning of 1839 that Vinet worked the most actively on this long pamphlet; that is to say, during and after the debates of the Grand Council on the subject of Ecclesiastical Law, and under the impression of the disappointments incident on the part he took in the struggle.

“18th March 1839.—To-day I wrote the last lines of my treatise.

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.



"I spent the day reading my treatise, with which I am utterly disgusted," he added later.

"A month from that date, a friend wrote him that his work was crowned. On the following day Vinet found his lecture-room filled to overflowing. In addition to his ordinary pupils were others from the Gymnasium, together with numerous friends and colleagues. As he entered every one rose, and a hymn, composed by Juste Olivier, was sung. Vinet paused on the threshold, visibly affected. When the singing was ended he addressed a few words to the students, and terminated with a short prayer. Then he begged to be excused from giving his lesson. His chair was ornamented with garlands and bouquets. A crown of laurel, which was offered to him on this occasion, remained suspended in his cabinet until his death. On the following day Vinet wrote in his Diary: '*2nd May.*—All *fêtes* have their morrow.'

*To Mdlle. Vinet, 5th May 1839.*

"I reproach myself, dear sister, with having left you to learn from others the prize I have obtained. Will you forgive me? Thirteen years bring many changes, within as well as without. This triumph has not touched and thrilled me as did the first, and I should scarcely think anything about it if others did not make me do so. The affection shown me by the students has been the true crown. I am wrong: the true crown is the crown of thorns, and that will soon come. The wise and prudent are greatly alarmed. . . . People ask how it comes to pass that with such convictions I can remain "at the head of the Church," as they say—as if I had put myself there. . . . The day will come when those who are most opposed to my theory will become its defenders. It is for me a part of Christian truth. M. and K. have always believed that it was only liberalism on my side. They are per-

fectly mistaken; and if they will only deign to read me, they will see of what stuff I am made.'

"Vinet's friends were impatient to read his pamphlet; but when he received the news of its success, he was already engaged in the preparation of his *New Discourses*. During the years 1839-41 these works were the principal occupations of Vinet's hours of so-called leisure,—occupations which were constantly interrupted by appeals from the outer world. In addition to his regular contributions to the *Semeur*, a thousand other claims demanded his attention. Consultations, discussions, conferences with pastors, work on committees and councils, the supervision of a secondary school<sup>1</sup> for girls which he had been instrumental in founding, and the countless visits to which we have before alluded, left little leisure in his life. Two principles were at war in Vinet's breast. The first has been well described by a quotation from Lavater: 'Enlarge rarely; but always accomplish the circle of your vocation.' The second principle was the instinct of charity, which led him not

<sup>1</sup> *The École Supérieure de Jeunes Filles* (Rue Bel. Air.) still flourishes in Lausanne, and is faithful to the traditions of its early history. In an article, entitled "The Education of Women of the Middle Classes," Vinet had exposed his plan, realized by the foundation of the school. His ideas are best expressed in a letter written to a young girl:—

"8th June 1844.—I cannot place an insuperable barrier between your list and mine. Certainly there are books which must be left to those who are condemned to read them, or else one must be strong enough to describe the whole of the ellipse—to read and ponder over everything! Then perhaps the ideas would be neutralized one by the other, and the universal levelling would create a blank. Failing this, you must reduce the list. But how? Perhaps by reserving to a more advanced age speculative reading. You could then devote your time to concrete facts—the history of human society, the history of nature, and the *best* poetry. Better twice Dante than once Jocelyn (let this be said without contempt for a poet whom I admire). Poetry is the universal language: prose is that of a race, of an age, of a class of objects; poetry is that of all the world, and of everything."

to hold back if any had need of him. He has often been seen flying away at the sound of the door-bell, and imploring his wife to receive the visitor in his place, and returning a few moments later smitten with remorse at the thought of having turned from an occasion of usefulness. More than once he undertook to look over some MSS. that a friend desired to publish, and the work became transformed under his pen. Too often he was tormented by laborious correspondence. It is touching to watch this thinker, so occupied and so ill, write letter after letter to recommend a friend, or to try to find some occupation for a pupil. These letters, all written in a fine clear, regular hand, are a living proof of that 'mania of perfection' which he applied to all the spheres of life. Among Vinet's correspondents must be numbered most of the men of letters—poets, thinkers, and journalists—of Paris. He had no need to travel in order to see the world, for the world came to him. He was the foremost representative of a form of Christianity which is everywhere in a minority, but which nevertheless everywhere exists, and which, instead of applying itself to the externals of life, penetrates and raises it to the height of the ideal. People came to him just as in the Middle Ages souls which hungered and thirsted after righteousness haunted the solitude of illustrious penitents. Among others was a Russian Prince, with whom he made a long study of some of the books of the New Testament. Then came students from German Switzerland, who, not content with following his lectures, brought him every week a new composition, and received the preceding essay corrected, annotated, sometimes almost re-written. The moment came when he felt obliged to take measures to secure a little privacy. Yielding to the insistence of his friends, he placed a card on the door, begging visitors not to knock between certain hours. But in a few

weeks the card disappeared. Vinet had taken it down himself, after bitterly reproaching his lack of charity and patience.

"In spite of so many different preoccupations, the period of which we speak was perhaps the most fruitful in the career of Vinet. It would probably have been still more so if his health had been less precarious. Towards the end of the year 1840 he was attacked by the smallpox. The crisis once passed, he appeared to be in better health, and he took up his work with renewed vigour. He had resumed his old habit of singing as he went in and out of the house, and his friends rejoiced in this respite from suffering, when on the 21st January 1841 an accident threatened to cost him his life. While walking in the street, he slipped and fell heavily to the ground. The passers-by carried him to the nearest house, and hastened to bring medical assistance. During the first days, his sufferings were so cruel that the least movement called forth cries. 'Oh, it is too much,' he was heard to say while under the influence of this physical anguish. Then he added, 'No; it is never too much.' If during these moments of agonized suffering an impatient word escaped his lips, he was sure to express sorrow afterwards. At times he imagined himself to be near death, and he prepared to meet his end. 'Ah, friend,' he said to his kindly host, 'it is not theology that helps one to die.' His friends rallied around him. One day, when three or four of them transported him on a sheet from one bed to another, he stretched out his trembling hands and blessed them. The emotion was great in Lausanne when he was known to be in danger. 'I must go and thank all the people who have inquired for me,' said Vinet. 'You must do nothing of the kind,' was the reply, 'or you will have to visit the whole town.'

"Working men clustered round the house in order to

get the earliest news of his condition ; and when it was made known that he was well enough to bear a move, they offered to transport him to his own dwelling. One of them—a poor cobbler—gave him on this occasion a crown of moss, which was henceforth suspended in Vinet's study by the side of the crown of laurel. These touching marks of respect were offered neither to the preacher nor to the man of letters, but to the friend of the 'common people.' They knew, these working men, that if one of them went to ask for help or counsel, Vinet would receive him in his study, would make him sit down, and would listen to him to the end with serious interest, and would accompany him to the door with the same courtesy and respect that he would have bestowed on a personage of exalted rank. In reality Vinet pushed to excess the respect which he considered due to his social inferiors. He tormented himself with the idea that his small writing—which nevertheless was very distinct—gave trouble to the compositors, and, in order to save their eyes and their time, he caused most of his manuscript to be copied. Once a working printer paid him a visit in order to ask, 'What is meant by philosophy?' Vinet, without replying directly, enumerated some general ideas respecting the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. The workman who possessed certain theories, hastened to expose them, and was met by the exclamation, 'You are talking philosophy, sir; you are talking philosophy!'" It may readily be imagined that the honest printer was as pleased to find that he was a philosopher as was M. Jourdain to learn that he had been talking "prose."

"The story reaches us of a peasant woman, intelligent, cultivated, and pious, who had moments of doubt and anguish, accompanied by secret rebellion. She had

opened her heart to her pastor, who had reproved, counselled, but all in vain. He lent her theological works, which she understood without difficulty, and devoured with passion. It was in this way that she came across Vinet's writings. Never had any author touched her so deeply; and she was seized with a great desire to speak with him, if only for a few moments. But how was she to reach a man placed so high? 'It is very easy,' said the pastor. 'Lausanne is not far: go and see him.' At length she summoned courage to follow this advice. Her heart beat violently when one morning she knocked at Vinet's door. He retained her for the whole of the day. On her return the pastor asked, 'Well, have you seen him?' 'Yes; and this time I have found some one who has *humiliated* me.' 'What, *humiliated*? M. Vinet would never humiliate any one.' 'Yes, he has humiliated me profoundly. His humility, his goodness broke the pride which always rises within me when you and others try to help me. You say good things, but you say them as a director. You judge me from above; but he—he placed himself at my side as if I had been his equal. I spent the whole day with him, and he never uttered a word which could make me feel that I was his inferior. You—you only half understand me, and he—he understands me altogether. He has felt all that I have felt. I could have believed he was my brother, and yet—such a great man.' ”<sup>1</sup>

A few days later Vinet sent to this peasant woman, as to a friend, one of his books from the press.

Many are the delightful souvenirs left by Vinet to those who saw him during his rare hours of leisure. Surrounded by a few chosen friends, he could laugh, expand, and charm his listeners by his gaiety. Sometimes yielding to the pressing invitation of M. de Staël,

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

he went to pass a day at Coppet, when he would meet M. de Broglie and Mme. Neckar de Saussure, and the conversation would be graceful and animated. Vinet's talk was that of a man of taste. He did not preach, he conversed. He was guiltless of the affectation which leads some devout persons to talk of nothing but devotion. He feared that self-love had a great deal to do with the matter; and in the unrestraint of familiar conversation he preferred to turn towards literature, art, poetry, in which every one can bear a part, and which, if properly handled, are not more futile than any other.

"What would you go first to see in Paris?" inquired a lady renowned for her severe form of piety.

"*Rachel*," was Vinet's calm reply.

"22nd May 1840.

"If all conversation was not infected with politics," wrote Vinet to his sister, "I should greatly like the society of Lausanne. But, in reality, politics are odious things, especially when they are complicated with religion. On this last point minds are more irritated than since the law of 20th May. The hatred of the Revival did not stop at the dissenters. Never have the clergy been so unpopular, so bitterly attacked, and so little defended. I see in this a sign that the Church or religion will conduct its affairs itself. The clergy can never be the point of departure, or the rallying point of any generous movement. Remember what I tell you. I should be only too happy if events prove me to be wrong."

"Vinet knew how to laugh; and so heartily that those who lived in his intimacy think they can still hear the joyous sound of his voice. He did not laugh faintly on a certain day when he recounted at table the history of the good lady who, desirous of making a present to a friend, and not knowing what to choose, took a pen and pricked a passage in the Bible, much as Panurge consults

the 'Virgilian oracle.' 'He put their garments on the ass,' replied the sacred text. Immediately the good lady betook herself to the nearest shop and bought a dress for her friend."

We will conclude this chapter with a charming letter written to some little girls :—

*To the Misses Marquis, June 1841.*

"Here is the little Breton song I promised you. I send you with it a thousand good wishes, which do not need to be set to music. Since my visit to you, I hope that your health has been as good as mine has been bad. My malady allowed me to mount alone to Chatelard, but it was waiting for me below. May God preserve you, dear little ones! We should love you even better if you would come to see us with father and mother. You ought to know what a pleasure it is to have had one's friends under one's own roof. Something remains behind when they are no longer there. Their remembrance haunts the chambers when one sees them no more. I am sure that mine must haunt you as a long, pale, black spectre. But I hope that it does not frighten you. Oh, how sweet it would be to see the image of all those one has loved! The only spectres that are terrible are the visions of our sins. May they never present themselves to us, save as supplicating figures bathed in tears who take us by the hand to lead us to Jesus!—Good-bye, dear children. *Au revoir.*

"A. VINET."



## CHAPTER XXV.

*Letters on the Subject of Catholicism—Vinet as a Director of Conscience—Letters on Religious Subjects.*

It was about this time that Vinet entered upon a correspondence with the Abbé de Baudry, a venerable old man, who was persuaded that Vinet had only one step to make in order to enter into the bosom of Mother Church. The discussion turned on such subjects as the institution of the ministry, the succession of tradition, the respective positions of Catholicism and of Protestantism. A page selected from this long controversy will show Vinet's position with regard to Catholicism.

“ We do not like to hear it said that Protestantism has *succeeded* to Catholicism. That which has existed during fifteen centuries is the Christian Church, which belongs to us, and to which we belong in so far as we are Christian. We claim Chrysostom, Basil, Augustin, Bernard, as well as you. To deny them, or to deny the Church wherein they shine as torches, would be to deny ourselves. As Christians, that is to say, *as free* (because Christianity is a holy liberty), this Church has borne fine fruit, it bears it still, and the principle of truth and of liberty which it has still retained has not perished under the blows that it has received from a deplorable system. It is against this system that we protest; it is in this sense that we are *Protestant*. We disavow the principle of the Romish Church which has interrupted the rays of pure luminous truth, which descend upon humanity from the adorable throne of God.”

After protesting against "the making of human alterations in divine documents, forbidding the reading of the Bible, the invention of tradition, and the usurpation of the authority of God's truth by the priest," Vinet goes on to consider the question of unity.

"Catholicism alone is said to possess unity. This is certainly true. Protestantism has liberty for its principle, it is reduced in consequence to accept diversity of opinion. What would it gain to have unity without liberty? that is to say, unity without life, without the ludicrous imitation of unity: this would be a contradiction of terms. Unity is in the kingdom of Jesus Christ and of the Spirit. Unity is in Christianity. There *is* a universal Church, and we believe in it; and there we find, not the vain form of unity, but its reality, and therein consists true Catholicism, taking the word in the primitive beauty of its significance.

"Let us be content with this unity, and let us regret all unity that is not formed under the auspices of liberty."

The breadth of Vinet's sympathies may be seen in a letter addressed some years later to another distinguished Romanist.

*To M. de Châteaubriand, 10th June 1844.*

"My position as a Protestant has not increased the gulf marked by nature between the author of the 'Genius of Christianity' and one of his most obscure admirers. I am a Protestant, it is true, but in a sense that is so general and so little historical, that I do not feel myself a stranger in any spot wherein I find that faith in divine charity, that recourse to the mystery of the incarnation, and that sincerity of repentance, which are the crown and the humble triumph of our shattered existence. Born a Protestant, I may say that I have also become one by conviction; but I entreat you not to see in me only the Protestant and the adversary, but the Christian; that is to say, *the brother*."

*To M. P. Béranger.*

"You say you are neither Catholic nor Protestant. He who writes to you could also say in a sense that he is neither the one nor the other. Protestant on the questions of hierarchy and authority, on every other I am simply Christian; that is to say, that I believe in the greatness of man, and that I believe that his misery is in proportion to his greatness; that I believe in the necessity, the reality, and the regenerating virtue of divine pardon; in the intimate union of humanity and of God in the person of Christ the Mediator; the new Adam of a new humanity, the immortal King of the future. The problem posed by all religion and all philosophy, and which, humanly speaking, remains insoluble, is the birth and the triumph of the love of God in the heart. All that is worthy to be called happiness, glory, liberty is there. One cannot, save by loving God with a sovereign love, frankly accept either life or death. Moreover, God is only sovereignly lovable in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is in the gospel; that is to say, in His own words and acts, and not in the mouth of man. This is my creed, or, if you like better, my philosophy."

Another quotation will show that, with all his breadth and liberality, Vinet could be true to his principles.

*To M. Turquetz.*

"I do not feel the least inclination to idealize the characters of the Reformers of the sixteenth century. Truth will be stronger than I am. I know that they were men, and that the divine treasure was carried in earthen vessels. . . . But one must not seek to blacken them, and the writers of your communion have strangely blackened Luther. Ah, if you would only free yourself from prejudice, how you would love this grand personality! Many persons, friends even more than enemies, have made Luther the hero of free criticism and nothing more. He has neither merited this excess of honour nor this indignity. The private letters which, long before undertaking a religious revolution, or even seeing the necessity for so doing, he wrote

from his cell are full of the central idea of Protestantism, of salvation by the internal work of faith in opposition to the external works of the law ; and faith for Luther implies *moral reformation, the regeneration of the heart*, but first of all, the humble abandonment of our fate to the hands of divine grace. This is the point of departure of Luther and the Reformation.

"It is in 'the hunger and thirst for righteousness' that the Reformation took its source. Later, the river was obliged to traverse the miry ground of our humanity.

"Will you believe it, the magnificent verses which you fulminate against a great man—but only a man—cause me less pain than the homage you render to a human creature, to a woman whom the gospel had sufficiently honoured by the announcement that all the ages would call her blessed. . . . It is absolutely impossible to find in the gospel anything that gives the least sanction to Virgin-worship, which, in our days, tends to substitute itself for the religion of Christ, and of which Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and all the great men of the Church of the seventeenth century saw with terror the enormous development. . . . I would not enlarge on this subject if I did not see in the worship of Mary the annihilation of true Christianity.

"If you reflect on the capital idea and on the moral sense of Christianity, I might say on its psychology, and if after this you contemplate the place that Catholicism gives in its system to Mary and to some personages arbitrarily decorated with the title of saint, you may then ask yourself if it be not a snare of the tempter to bring back humanity by slow degrees to polytheism."

Vinet's correspondence may be regarded as one of the most valuable sides of his ministry. He had become almost in spite of himself the director of conscience to numbers of persons belonging to all classes of society and all shades of thought.

The value which he put upon *right thinking*, considering it as the mainspring of all right action, may be seen from the following:—

*To Mme. la Baronne de Staël, 1840.*

"When we think about religion, we must be sure to think *well*. The moment one sees a difficulty, it must be grappled with—not lightly dismissed without a solution. To be able to prove clearly that some point must be left obscure is in itself a kind of solution. During some time the conscience has been obstructed by confusion of principles. Ideas have travelled in a vicious circle, and the two elements of which the work of salvation is composed—I mean grace and faith—appear to me to dispute the ground. There is a definition of faith on page 42<sup>1</sup> which has been for me a ray of light and a real deliverance. I do not know whether everything in this treatise would appear orthodox to *the theology* of the Revival, but I have not the least doubt about its being in the intention and meaning of *the Bible*.<sup>2</sup>

"Faith," says the author, 'is nothing else than the will to accept the pardon of God and to renounce the research of all other means of salvation.' The more I examine this definition, the more it rejoices my heart. It gives me something to say to those sincere but unfortunate minds who, touched by the Spirit of Truth, believe in their state of sin, abjure all self-righteousness, and yet find themselves kept back by a chain which stretches before them—by education, by first impressions, or perhaps by a sceptical temperament. . . . With such a disposition of will one is brought very near to believe altogether . . . and sooner or later the light must dawn."

In the latter part of this letter Vinet owns that on the question of the "larger hope" he inclines with all the "weight of his heart" towards the opinion of the author, and that he is fain to confess that those who partake it "have advanced arguments which are not without value." But he fears that this view may lead men to "put off their

<sup>1</sup> Referring to a MS. shown to Vinet by M. de Staël.

<sup>2</sup> Here Vinet enunciates clearly enough his doubts as to whether the theology of the Revival was identical with the meaning and intention of *the Bible*.

conversion from year to year," and this fear, this "scruple," makes him "hesitate." He thinks also that there may be a moment known only to God when the renewal of the soul could be nothing short of the cessation of identity.

Some of Vinet's most interesting letters are addressed to M. Clavel de Brenles, who had urged that advanced age was an obstacle to the appropriation of truth.

*To M. de Brenles.*

"It is the heart that recognises and appropriates religious truth. It is the heart that *knows*. The most learned, in order to be taught well, need to be taught by the heart. God is not within the compass of metaphysics. Philosophy never obtains under the name of God anything but an aggregate of abstract properties. . . . God is not reflected as a living substantial Reality except in the soul: the soul alone knows God. A life which is too intellectual as well as one that is too sensual can dull this *sense of God* . . . if I dare so call the principle of all religion. Apart from the tyrannical preoccupations of the intellect or of the senses, the soul would believe naturally in the living God, for all the pure and true inclinations which it feels are nothing else than the presence of God in His internal dwelling. It is more easy for the eye to deny the light than for the soul to deny God. To believe in God, it is to believe in the soul, in life, in reason, in will, and in love. . . . All these when perfect, infinite, and eternal, are God. Either there is in us neither thought, nor will, nor love, nor personality, or else God is a personality thinking, willing, loving infinitely. It is not indirectly but instantaneously that a simple man acquires the consciousness of God. It is not for him the last term of a syllogism, but the necessary premises of all his reasoning, the basis of all truth and of all certainty. If any one loves God, God is known of him. We must come back to this natural method: we must adore God before we know Him, invoke Him before having defined Him; suppose His existence and His personality, cast ourselves on our knees before His mercy and love which must be somewhere, because we find them in our-

selves; name God, call upon God, cry to Him without troubling ourselves whether our sighs will find their way; pray, pray again, and force God, in whom we scarcely believe, to descend and to become sensible to our hearts."

In his reply, M. de Brenles exposed the difficulties he experienced (1) with regard to the personality of God; (2) concerning the divine origin of the Bible. "These books appear to me to have been written by men." Vinet sent the following letter to M. Forel:—

"I feel myself drawn towards this sincere soul (*i.e.* M. de Brenles) by the bond of a common faith in moral truth, which, after all, is the soil upon which religious convictions grow and flourish. I can see no obstacle to his reception of the truth save the force of certain intellectual habits against which I know myself how difficult it is to struggle. Such is this repugnance for anthropomorphism. . . . The personality of God implies it, and it is the personality which is the real difficulty. The rest comes of itself, and in the system of a personal God a degree more or less great of anthropomorphism in the writings which relate His dispensations cannot be a subject either of scandal or of embarrassment. And as to the personality of God, I would venture to ask if the personality of man, which it is impossible to deny, is not in itself an unfathomable problem. Is it possible to deny to God the qualities which emanate from Him? . . . I cannot but approve of M. de Brenles' wish to ask Scripture to explain itself, but I hardly know what method of study to suggest. Perhaps I would seek to extract from the Gospels the form, the character, and the thoughts of Jesus Christ, then I would seek Him in the Prophets, which are full of Him, and themselves so spiritual, so profound in the midst of a coarse people prone to materialize everything. Perhaps the sight of these great preparations and of the gradual development of a universal religion would inspire me with the desire to mount to the cradle of humanity, and to seize there the first indications of the designs of God. All this, well grasped, would render easy and intelligible

the history of the dispensations of God towards the chosen people. . . . In all this study *I should have met men ; I should have read human writings, more human in a sense than an unintelligent orthodoxy would care to concede ;* but I should not be surprised by this fact, any more than by the atmosphere which envelopes the earth and intercepts the rays of heaven's sunshine."

In another letter Vinet returned to the question of the definition of faith.

*To M. C. Scholl, September 1840.*

"Do you not believe, dear friend, that faith is essentially *a moral state*, a form of life? To believe otherwise is not to believe. . . . The greatest certitude obtained by thought alone is so far removed from faith that with certain men it resembles incredulity, or, at all events, it *allows incredulity* to exist by its side. It is in a way to receive light from below instead of from above. . . . The heart must be taken into account. Logic and philosophy both demand this. It is *with religion that we must reason about religion*. I once wrote this on my tablets: 'Never speak of God without speaking to God. On religious subjects the best meditation is prayer. To have prayed is to have thought.' I should almost have preferred not to have had any theology. The best is that which is summed up in the word 'Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me.' But if we must have theology, let it be bold and let it be good ; otherwise do not attempt to be a theologian. I respect and I envy the faith of the simple, but I cannot endure the speculation which will only speculate according to its taste,—the research which does not really *seek Truth*,—the theology which stops half way because it does not suit it to go farther,—the theology which reasons and which curses reasons,—the theology which *grows angry* when one will not stop at its point of view."



CHAPTER XXVI.<sup>1</sup>

*The "New Religious Discourses"—Extracts from Sermons.*

VINET had been attracted by the character of systematic simplicity offered by the doctrine of the Revival. The sacrifice of Christ procuring to believers a free salvation, this salvation producing love, this love giving birth to a new life and to good works, such was the machinery by means of which Christianity seemed alone to work. Later, this very simplicity became suspicious in his eyes. He saw in it the impoverishment of the gospel. Without giving up the idea of the new incentive which morality borrows from Christian doctrine, he recognised that religious as well as physical life is an infinitely complex phenomenon. He perceived a grave error in the point of view which condemns the moral principle to evolve its consequences with the necessity of a mechanical law. Finally, it appeared to him that contemporary preaching had cheapened the riches of the points of view contained in Holy Scripture. The *New Discourses* were the result of these reflections. These studies rather than sermons were addressed to the students in theology, not preached from the pulpit. We find Vinet rehabilitating a word which had been almost banished from the language of religion,—morality. "True morality," it has been well said, "proceeds from law taken in its highest sense: Love—the love of God

<sup>1</sup> Edmond Scherer.

and of men." This was the underlying thought of the *Discourses*.

"They are," says Vinet in his preface, "studies on some of the principal characters or principal applications of the law of Christianity. Herein consists the unity of the volume. . . . In morality man cannot comprehend anything short of perfection, and for the conscience every incomplete sense is a non-sense. It is a non-sense for man to propose to himself any end save perfection. . . . The only possible perfection is progress,—progress which knows neither limit nor cessation."

It is easy to see that Vinet has little taste for historical arguments, or for that chain-work of inferences by which the proselyte is supposed to be led from the authenticity of the biblical records to their credibility; from their credibility to the reality of the miracles and prophecies related in the book; finally, from the reality of miracles to the divinity of doctrine. Vinet owed none of his Christianity to such researches; a secret sentiment warned him of the insufficiency of history, we will not say to give faith, but even to produce an assured conviction.

"The religious conviction is of such a nature that it *implies* the historic certitude of evangelical facts much more than it rests upon them."

The argument which Vinet loved to develop was that which he draws from the moral renovation of man by the gospel. This change, this new life, are realities whose evidence is full and striking.

"It is impossible," says Vinet, "that a religion which leads to God should not also come from Him."

The first sermon has for its title "The Folly of Truth."<sup>1</sup> Vinet affirms—

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 18.

"that a religion which appeared reasonable to everybody would not be the true religion. The world will always call the solitary follower of truth a fool. It knows no wisdom apart from the authority of the greatest number. It is certainly not natural to suppose that truth was intended to belong only to the few. It was meant to belong to all; but sin has deadened the moral sense, and the soul is no longer the mirror in which truth is reflected. Although truth can only be discerned at first by the few, sooner or later this particular view becomes the opinion of the crowd.

"Derision has greeted those who first endeavoured to recall some principle of eternal justice to mankind. Torture, slavery, the degradation of women, and religious persecution have been approved by the public voice in spite of private protest.

"This conflict proves (1) that man cannot do without truth; (2) that he is no longer in communion with it. A principle is needed to create, so to speak, another human nature. This principle is Christian Truth, which, at its first appearance, had all the world against it. The folly of the Christian is seen in the *maxims* which serve as rules of conduct and pass into his life, as well as in the *doctrines* he professes. The world believes in the opinion of the majority, in antiquity, and little in truth. But Christianity has wished to found a race of men who would believe in truth rather than in human opinion, in antiquity, or in force, and whom the world would regard as fools."

In the second sermon,<sup>1</sup> on "The Wicked and the Day of Calamity,"<sup>2</sup> the exact correspondence, the intimate

<sup>1</sup> To Mme. Forel.

"I have received Vinet's *New Discourses*, into which I have looked with much pleasure. I was very much struck by the second, 'Le Méchant et le jour de la calamité.' The certainty, the inevitable, infallible certainty, of the connection between moral goodness and happiness, moral evil and misery, is an immense doctrine, full of important results." T. Erskine.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xvi. 4.

connection between sin and suffering, is shown to be the meaning of a text which has been sometimes interpreted in such a manner as to blaspheme the idea of a God of love. Vinet invites us, on the contrary, to gaze on the order and harmony which reign throughout creation.

"Supposing that bodies sometimes remembered and sometimes forgot to press towards the centre of the globe,—that the law which reduces to vapour a quantity of water proportionate to the intensity of the rays of the sun could be suspended or act irregularly,—accidents would result that would upset the world and dishonour God."

Vinet shows that the same disturbance would take place in the region of morals if once the moral order binding together cause and effect, sin and suffering, were infringed.

Perhaps the sermon which marks most distinctly the progress made by Vinet is that entitled "The Work of God."<sup>1</sup> Vinet represented faith to be *a work*, and, indeed, the first of works, something essentially moral.<sup>2</sup>

"Judaism and Christianity are not, cannot be, other than two ages of the same truth. Each of these Churches has its watchword,—that of the Jewish Church is law, and that of the Christian Church is faith. . . . The error of the Jews is to reduce all to works, and not to raise themselves to the faith. The error of the Christian is not to see that true faith is a work, and that if it be not a work it is nothing. These two errors do not so much characterize

<sup>1</sup> "When theologians understand that faith is not a special faculty, but a spiritual complex act in which the *whole man* is engaged, they will cease to imagine that men can believe without understanding, or accept by faith that which they reject by the intelligence." E. Scherer.

<sup>2</sup> John vi. 28, 29.

two epochs—of which one still endures and the other no longer exists—as two classes of persons, or *two tendencies* which reproduce themselves at all times and in all places. . . . These two errors are actual, are living, and doubtless one or the other has representatives in this audience.”

The second part of the sermon addressed to Christians who refuse to understand that faith itself is a work, touches at the root of the narrow exaggerated views which fatally compromised the Revival.

“For some to believe in salvation by grace is nothing more than to *consent to be saved by grace.*” But, according to Vinet, it is the acquiescence of the heart in the living realities of the Christian religion. Faith is the principle of vital religion, and salvation consists less in the reversal of a judicial sentence than in *newness of life*. “In expressing himself thus, Vinet cut himself adrift from Protestant orthodoxy. The form under which the doctrine of justification was expressed appeared to him fatal, because it suppressed as much as possible the moral element of belief in order to express a kind of ‘intellectual *opus operatum.*’”<sup>1</sup>

In “Tears and Songs,”<sup>2</sup> Vinet contrasts the work of John the Baptist and of Jesus Christ.

“The preaching of repentance, which was that of John, is, in a sense, an earthly, human word,—an idea which is born in the conscience of man, which the conscience of man receives and understands. But the preaching of grace is a *divine word*, and He who pronounces it is of heaven, and is above all. . . .

“People have disputed for centuries on the subject of grace and of law, on the rigour of the gospel and its sweetness, and the last word will always belong, not to the most true, but to the most skilful. But when the

<sup>1</sup> Astié.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xi. 16-19.

wisdom from on high passes from a book to a man, and from words to life, the world can see with its eyes the truth. Christians will be always the living and triumphant apology of Christianity. . . . You have disputed whether grace and law could subsist side by side; here is the union realized in a man like yourself. Because this man thought he had received from God an irrevocable and absolute pardon, he is only the more attached to the observation of the holy law of God; this man, who makes of his will a perpetual offering to the will of God, who treats his body with severity and represses his earthly inclinations, does not taste any the less the sweet assurance that his salvation does not depend on his works, but on the pure grace of God. You have disputed as to whether Christianity destroyed the affections and narrowed the heart; here is a man who has chosen Jesus Christ for his portion, and has placed his heart 'where his treasure is;' yet no one could be more accessible, more tender, more human, more truly social. You ask how one could, with this assurance of salvation, remain within the limits of humility; here is a man to whom the most glorious hopes only reveal more clearly his nothingness, and who is more disposed than ever to place himself below others, regarding all men as more excellent than himself. . . . We must own that the problem is solved, and that 'Wisdom is justified of her children.' . . . Speak about Christian doctrine, but above all *live as Christians*. To all sophisms, to all subtleties, oppose *your life*. Cause Christianity to be recognised, not only as a doctrine, but as a living, unexceptionable, perpetual *fact*."

An excellent example of the same kind of reasoning is afforded in a reply to a letter from one who felt himself to be weighed down with the burden of sin, from which he felt that the gospel alone could deliver him, *if the gospel were true*.

"You recognise that religion conciliates, repairs, accomplishes all, and yet you ask, *Is it true?* I ask you if you are not already in possession of a result which no one can

take from you, and if from this moment you ought not to act and live as though religion were true. . . . You will say, may be, 'Who would run these risks on the faith of a "perhaps"?' What 'risk' do you run? That of being wiser, purer, more virtuous than you would have been without it, and consequently *happier*. From the moment that you have recognised moral truth, nothing can dispense you from the obligation of living in accordance with its rule. A profound saying has been uttered by Jesus Christ: 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.' Yes, he who *will*s shall learn. Will is almost knowledge. Act—act while studying, and study while acting."

In the sermon on the "Extraordinary,"<sup>1</sup> M. Rambert affirms that "Vinet had never been more ideally Christian,—had never exposed with greater power the perfection of Christian Ethics,—had never shown himself more frankly opposed to the tepid unmeaning form of Christianity which reigns in the world."

"All the gospel is *extraordinary*," says Vinet. "It is all terror for him to whom it is not all love. . . . The 'extraordinary' is the 'ordinary' of the Christian." . . .

Vinet draws the portrait of the extraordinary being (the Christian), and renders it more life-like by means of the authentic examples of Jesus Christ and of St. Paul. Then he compares sadly the ideal with the real.

"The Church needs a new heroic age. In former times, it found the elements prepared in the ardent and frenzied hatred of kings and of nations; now, if this arena is lacking, it must be found elsewhere. We must search for war in the bosom of peace. But what war if not that of the spirit against the flesh, and the will of love against the will of selfishness? This war alone, this conflict of the Christian against himself, this work of perfection, will proclaim its

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 47. French translation: "What do ye that is extraordinary!"

true character to the world. . . . Christianity in the midst of general exhaustion is the one thing that is new, young, and inexhaustible. Christianity is the eternal youth of the human race, but it is on condition that its votaries are 'extraordinary.' . . . Is it so with us? Are we the witnesses or the accusers of the gospel, the false or the true patterns of Christianity? Do we feel within ourselves instincts of heroism or of cowardice? Are we simple 'amateurs' of the wisdom of the gospel, or are we the champions and soldiers of Jesus Christ? Do we look upon the world as a field of battle, life as a bloody yet glorious campaign? Jesus Christ as a divine victim whom we must avenge—yes, *avenge upon ourselves*? If it be thus with us, we are Christians; otherwise, we are not. If it be not thus with us, we have nothing to give to our contemporaries—nothing to transmit to the future; but if we answer to the description given in the sacred text, we shall be a link in the living chain by which the last ages will be joined to the first, and the consummation of ages to the consummation of Calvary."

In the sermon on the "Good Samaritan,"<sup>1</sup> Vinet shows that the Christian who would resemble Jesus Christ must love the whole of the human race.

"It is the mark, the glory of true Christianity, not that we should confound with the love of humanity this insane adoration of human nature, this great league of human pride, which, making of humanity a chimerical personality, reduces the individual to nothing, and collects around a vague idea the workmen of a second Babel. . . . No, this humanity that Jesus Christ commends to your love is composed of men whom He has loved, and whom He is come to save. Social progress is not the chief end of the great work of Jesus Christ; no, individuals have a value of their own, they exist for themselves, they depend immediately on God, they are not merely the agents of a collective progress which is but a sign or means of individual progress. No, it is not society that

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 29-37.



Jesus Christ has come to save; it is not 'society' that will be transported to heaven and crowned with palms. Nevertheless, humanity forms a real body organized to fulfil the designs of God, and warring on all sides for their accomplishment. . . . Humanity works for men, and in this co-operation with humanity *it is for men* that you work, because Jesus Christ commends them as individuals to you."

In the sermon on the "Principle of Human Equality,"<sup>1</sup> Vinet touches one of the burning questions of the times; but he touches it only to purify it and lift it into a higher sphere. He invites the partisans of equality to consider the fact that—

"at all periods of history men create for themselves superiors, masters, rulers. Embarrassed by the sentiment of his responsibility, alienated from the divine will, man seeks a guide. It suffices for man that these masters are subject to death to feel his equality with them. In the presence of death, of sorrow, and of weakness, all men are equal. But we must not look for complete truth in facts that humiliate us. All love has its root in joy. The love of equality from the joy in salvation. God will have mercy upon all men. There is a joy which does not destroy humiliation, but which blesses it. Justice and mercy have kissed each other. Who will be more humble than he who is saved by grace? Who will better realize the dignity of human nature than the poor and insignificant being who feels that he is saved by grace. Grace which humbles the rich towards the poor raises the poor towards the rich."

In the sermon on the "Duty of Mutual Submission,"<sup>2</sup> Vinet declares—

"the spirit of submission and the spirit of independence to be the two elements which make up the perfection of social life. Neither the man who knows not how to submit, nor the man who knows not how to resist, is fit for society. The man who can do both is the truly

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. v. 21.

social being. We know that the Christian can submit; do we need to learn after so many facts related by history that the Christian can also resist? Who will give, if it be not the Christian, the example of true independence? Who will maintain the principle of resistance for the sake of justice, of human dignity, and of God, if not those who have inaugurated it in the world? What should we see in society, oscillating between the two extremes of servility and insolence, if Christians had not given—even to those who have not fully accepted it—the respect, unknown in the ancient world, for principles as principles, for truth as truth? . . . The gospel has solved the problem in making us draw by turns liberty from submission, and submission from liberty.”

In the “Time to do Good,”<sup>1</sup> Vinet speaks with deep earnestness (we might almost say with passion) of our duties towards the disinherited of the earth.

“According to the divine institution, there is in the world a loaf for every hungry man, a coat for every naked one, a consolation for each misfortune, a satisfaction for each need; the balance would be exact if we had not disturbed it; it is not God who is to blame, it is ourselves. He has only permitted this inequality in order to allow us to efface, or at all events to mitigate it. . . . He has willed that we should owe something to one another. . . . He has willed that the re-establishment of the equilibrium should be our work.”

“A touching story reaches us respecting the effect produced by the above sermon. A poor woman who gained her livelihood with difficulty received on Sunday the visit of an old friend who was not distinguished by her regard for cleanliness. As she only possessed one bed, she contemplated advising her visitor to seek hospitality elsewhere. The same evening, she heard Vinet preach on the Time to do Good, and she determined immediately to give up her bed to her friend, and to pass the night on a bench.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gal. vi. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Rambert.

In the "Vase of Perfumes,"<sup>1</sup> Vinet shows that the spirit of those who asked the indignant question—*Why this waste?* is alive among us at this hour.

"Would our century, preoccupied with questions of economy and of utility, understand any better than Judas this useless profusion and expensive homage? I suspect it of admiring in the history of the multiplication of the loaves, less the helpful compassion of the Friend of man than the care He showed to gather up the fragments that remained. How could this broken vase and spilt fragrance please those who say at the sight of our admirable cathedral,<sup>2</sup> 'Here is waste, both of money and of time. God does not dwell in temples made with hands; a more modest edifice would have sufficed—shelter, decency, and quiet: here are all the conditions which must be satisfied. A fine temple is a fine thing, but the "beautiful" must not be numbered among our needs; those of the poor cry louder, and it is only when they shall have ceased to cry that we can have the right to build cathedrals.' Mark well that it is not the idea of the disciples that our Saviour reproves, nor do we find in His reply an express approbation of Mary's conduct. Was her action the best possible in matter and in form? Our Saviour does not say. He honours Mary's *intention*. . . . We learn from this story the important lesson that an action is worth exactly as much as the intention which prompts its performance."

The preaching of the Revival had reduced all morality to an affection of the soul. The ideas of law and of duty had become foreign to its theology. "Love God and do as you like." Such was the received formulary. It is against this antinomian tendency that Vinet protests, recalling the reality and the independent substance of moral obligation. He admits that charity alone can accomplish righteousness, but he believes that righteousness is no less something which has an independent

<sup>1</sup> Mark xiv. 3-9.

<sup>2</sup> The cathedral of Lausanne.

existence. He believes that religion is before all things—*obedience*, and that there are error and peril in wishing to drown duty in love.

We shall see how Vinet treats these questions in the following discourse.

The sermon on the "End and the Beginning of the Law"<sup>1</sup> opens with the remark that—

"the subtlety of the Jewish mind and the natural malice of the human heart put obstacles in the way of the first preachers of the gospel. They could not avoid discussion, and many of St. Paul's letters owe their form to this necessity, although this form of teaching does not appear to have been St. Paul's own choice, and the simple and touching exposition of the truths of salvation, or an energetic appeal to the conscience and the heart, would probably have dominated in his writing, if the choice had depended on his taste. . . . Love is a force which enables us to perform our duty, and even a light by which to discern it; but love is not the principle of duty. Duty has its reason in itself, and conscience bears witness to it before love has urged us to accomplish it. It is true that love itself is commanded; because, on the one hand, *love is righteous*; and, on the other, it is the means of accomplishing all that is right. But love is *the end*, not *the beginning*, of the law. . . . In a word, righteousness is something apart, and although it can only be accomplished by love, it is *not love* itself. . . . Religion is before all things—obedience. Take away the idea of obedience, and you treat God as your equal instead of as your Lord. . . . Great sacrifices, suggested by love, can be accomplished without difficulty, because there is always joy in love; but, enforced by duty, the lightest sacrifice becomes painful. There is in justice something severe and imperious; there the conscience finds a Master. We are tempted to bargain our obedience; we doubt the sacrifices that are not asked of us in order to reduce to nothing those that duty imposes; and one sees but too many people who are at once generous and unjust, obliging and

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. i. 5.

ungrateful, prodigal and stingy,—devoted to the objects of their preference, hard to those who have claims on them; odious in the sphere wherein God has placed them,—admirable elsewhere; volunteers of affection and deserters of duty; and imagining that they can redeem by spontaneous sacrifice the violation of near and positive obligations. When you see certain persons neglecting obvious and known duties within their reach to seek others in another sphere, remember that it is because *duties that are sought are not real duties*. These men feel the need of occupation and of movement; they do not spare themselves; it is neither the work, nor the sacrifice, nor the danger—it is *the rule* that causes them to revolt. It is more easy for them to be sublime than to be simply virtuous; to be generous than to be just. . . . Can true love be found in a heart to which duty is not dear, to which the commandment is not sacred? . . . No, man is not thus framed: in good as well as in evil everything is connected. The good and the true are in unity. Justice is to love what the root is to the tree. . . . If you are wanting in charity, you are also wanting in justice. If one can, to a certain degree, be just towards some one without loving him, it is evident that if one does him harm one cannot love him. And when we see a man unfaithful to his first duties, it is in vain that he gives his body to be burned,—he has neither justice nor charity . . . give what name you like to the sentiment which makes him act for the good of others, this man *loves only himself in them*. He is mistaken in wishing to replace justice by charity, because justice is an essential part of charity. Charity is nothing but a superior and sublime justice.”

The concluding sermon on “Joy”<sup>1</sup> is perhaps, from a literary point of view, the most beautiful of the series. Joy is shown to be, not only the privilege of the Christian, but also his force, and the soil, so to speak, upon which the new creature is developed.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. v. 16.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

*Essay on the Manifestation of Religious Convictions.*

SCARCELY had the volume of Discourses appeared, when Vinet was seized with scruples, we might almost say with remorse. The day following the receipt of the first proofs he wrote in his Diary:—

*"I have been troubled on the subject of my sermons. I have not sufficiently insisted on the doctrine of salvation by grace."*

Later, he satisfied his conscience by criticizing the merit of works from the philosophical as well as from the religious point of view. It was his constant aim to embrace the two poles of thought at the same time. Vinet owns that the *New Discourses* do not reveal his entire opinions.

*To Mr. T. Erskine.*

"This official character impressed on the outflow of the heart and thought is a painful thing; and if I do not succeed in shaking off this yoke—if I cannot go back to the solitude in which alone I can find sincere inspiration—I shall not write any more. Understand me: if these discourses do not contain *all* my opinion, at least they contain nothing against it. But is one quite sincere when one does not say all? . . . Your friendship encourages me to tell you of a step I have just taken. I have left the national Church: but this subject would take me too far to-day. You will be pleased to learn that, as far as I can know myself, passion and caprice have had no part in this

determination. . . . I do not need to tell you that there is none of the spirit of separation in my action. I am as little of a separatist as it is possible to be ; and what right have I to separate myself from others, I who only feel, with regard to those with whom I am associated, my inferiority and my unworthiness ? But I could not bear to appear as the instrument of an iniquitous law, and among the clergy of the National Church I should have been badly placed to plead the cause of the separation of Church and State. I am printing a work on the subject at this moment. The argument of my thesis is essentially religious ; and I believe that I have placed the question on its true ground and in its strongest position. This will make up for the force which the author has failed to find in himself."

We must turn now to the book of which he speaks. Its cumbersome title reveals the author's plan : *An Essay on the Manifestation of Religious Convictions, and on the Separation of Church and State, regarded as the Necessary Consequence, and as the Guarantee of a Principle.*

The work divides itself naturally into two parts : one, a fine exposition of the duty of the expression of individual conviction ; the other is a dissertation on the relations existing between civil and religious society.

"The manifestation of individual belief is a duty imposed on every believer. Individuality is never the opponent of unity ; it is rather its means. Furthermore, the manifestation of our convictions is a duty which we owe to our neighbours. Christianity makes a duty of proselytism by giving it two powerful motives, gratitude and charity. We owe to our brother a share of the truth we have received.

"*It is also a right.* The Christian will neither accept protection nor persecution. Religion is not a language, it is a life. Association is one of the forms under which religious conviction is manifested. It is formed, not in order that we may believe (which is the act of the individual), but in order that we may *adore*. The first effect of a religion is to organize a society which is the communion

of spirits in the bond of a common idea. By this means conscience is aided, strengthened, and encouraged. If religion refused to be social, it would also cease to be individual. If each individual respected his conscience, association would never absorb individuality, it would never appear as a monument of prejudice and tyranny. . . . We are bound to be true, even if we are alone in the attainment. . . . To know what we believe is to know what we are. Silence is fatal."

At the same time, Vinet recommends that zeal should be tempered by discretion.

"The soul has its sentiment of modesty as well as the body, and a living faith renders this modesty yet more delicate and timid. . . . We must carefully watch over a treasure which can be easily dissipated by the breath of speech. . . . Religion is not an idiom which one must learn to speak fluently, but a life which must be expressed by action. Our soul must offer a home rather than an echo to holy truth."

It is scarcely necessary to add, that if Vinet boldly invites all convictions to manifest themselves in the light of day, it is because he firmly believes in the ultimate triumph of truth.

The connecting link between the two parts of the essay is found in a chapter, entitled "Persecution and Protection :"—

"Every duty carries with it a right; there is no right more sacred than that of fulfilling a duty; it is even the one absolute right, because it is linked to primitive necessity. Duty is the first, or to speak strictly, the sole necessity."

Thence follows the absolute condemnation of every kind of persecution, and of "*protection as a kind of persecution*, because it is a privilege for some and an exclusion for others."



In the second part of the essay, Vinet seizes the general features of the history of the mutual relations of Church and State.

"From the days when Rome, superficially converted to the doctrine of the Cross, turned the religion of the martyrs into a religion of the State, down to the present century, the antique, heathen, and Jewish idea of unity has prevailed over the modern and Christian idea of the distinction of the two societies. The alliance was often a compromise between the passions of the court and of the sacristy. By this ill-assorted union the two institutions which serve as the basis of social life, religion and politics, have been demoralized." . . .

Later, Vinet withdrew some of the expressions contained in this volume; but he held fast to the following sentence:—

"If the State has a conscience, *I have none*. . . . All my theory is there. The conscience of the State, *if it have one*, must be sovereign, and must absorb mine. . . . I recognise the legitimacy of certain relations between religion and the State. Religion dictates morals, and morals inspire laws. What more can one ask? There is nothing in common between the thesis I have defended and that which is commonly called *dissent*. I do not say separate yourselves from your Church, but separate *the Church from the State*. It is not a question of destruction, but of enfranchisement. Instead of overturning the Church, let us seek to reform it."

The following is Vinet's definition of the State:—

"'The State reproduces the whole man,' affirm certain philosophers — Hegel, Rothe, etc. This formula has a fine sound, but it is impossible. If there be identity between man and the State, it is but just to claim from the State all that one claims from the individual. If charity be a duty for the individual, it is also one for the State; and as the individual has been commanded to present the

right cheek after having been struck on the left, it would be equally legitimate to impose this rule upon the State. The logical consequence of such a system would be nothing more or less than the establishment of a theocracy.

"To this notion is opposed another, which reduces the State to the level of a simple institution, which only embraces one part of human life. This conception has for its result the separation of politics and religion,—of the State and of the Church. . . . Christianity obstinately resists the idea of an alliance between Church and State, which is neither more nor less than a heresy. Religion is the choice that the soul makes between the world and God, the visible and the invisible. One must be able to choose; and where there is no scope for freedom, one can neither love nor obey. If we obey, it is the obedience of the star, the plant, or the stone,—a purely passive obedience, which causes man to fall below himself. Religion is not possible *except when doubt is possible*. . . . Miracles produced the necessary impression, but they were only the preliminaries of religion, not religion itself. External theocracy shed a parting glow in the miracles of Jesus Christ, but the miracle was sacrificed little by little to the interest of individuality and of liberty. Miracle could not be the law of the new economy, whose aim was not the creation of a people, but of believing individuals. The principle of evidence gave place to the principle of liberty. . . . If this end has not been attained, Christianity would only be a transitory work, adoration 'in spirit and in truth' would not have been inaugurated, and Jesus Christ would have said prematurely—'It is finished.'"

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

*Robinson Crusoe—Vinet as a "Man of Letters"—Criticism.*

"EVERY one has a mania," writes Vinet. "Mine is to read every year the *chef-d'œuvre* of Defoe. I possess two copies, —one, a modern edition with elegant illustrations; the other printed in 1720 by l'Honoré & Châtelain, publishers of Amsterdam, with engravings, of which Robinson himself seems to have furnished the design, and a full-length portrait of this famous adventurer after the manner of Bernard Picard. This is the one I use, and lovers of Robinson will understand my preference. The style of the translation, the character of the printing, the form and the binding of the book, harmonize singularly with the subject and the nature of the story. I will never read it, if I can help it, in a modern edition, and I hope to read it again in this. I hardly know sweeter moments than those which I consecrate to this volume. To complete my pleasure, it needed but to speak of it to my friends; and this is why I write this article."<sup>1</sup>

"Whence comes this predilection of Vinet for Robinson? He loves him because he sees in him the type—the simplest, but none the less striking—of the misfortunes and sorrows of man.

"On one occasion Vinet found himself in a drawing-room when the conversation turned on some of the burning social questions of the day. The Socialists were severely handled. Vinet did not take part in the conversation till, unable to bear it any longer, he began to

<sup>1</sup> *Le Semeur.*

pass in review the principles, the sentiments, and the actions of those who proclaimed themselves the exclusive defenders of social order. This unlooked-for incident produced a striking effect, and all present listened in awed silence to the floods of eloquence which his intimates alone recognised as his natural utterance, and which differed entirely from the chastened style of his preaching. While rejecting the heathen theory of the State, by means of which certain persons undertook to heal the evils of society, he recognised no less the legitimacy of *the end* the Socialists had in view. Vinet came from the people, and he remained one of them to the end. Was it astonishing that this workman in the field of thought should not consider the division of the good things of life between those whose mission it is to *produce* and those whose mission it is to *enjoy*, to be absolutely equitable?

“We need not inquire on which side were his sympathies. Vinet has allowed us to perceive them at the end of his article on Robinson.”<sup>1</sup>

“Alas! there are perhaps in the bosom of society more *Robinsons* than one thinks. I own that for the most unfortunate it is still better to live in society than in the desert. We render one another involuntary services, and society bears us up; much as the sea bears the ship that she sometimes engulphs. Nevertheless, for a great number of those who, from custom, one continues to call members of the social body, there is much isolation, and for them society is a desert. It is of the utmost consequence that society, under the auspices of an enlightened charity, shall become more and more a living and spontaneous force, and that the most unfortunate may at last feel that they belong to it as truly as the members belong to a body. We tend, it seems to me, towards this end, and I believe that we shall arrive there,—the solidarity

<sup>1</sup> Astié.

of all. This Christian idea, which certain classes parody coarsely, gradually penetrates the conscience; and when conviction and good-will are there, can the means be long wanting? I own that all progress is slow, and that we shall not see all that our children will; but Robinson can already see the horizon whitened by the sails of the ship which is coming to carry him away from the desert island. Robinson, my brother, toiling man, without leisure, *without liberty*, almost without social relations, why can I not, with the eyes of the flesh, see the ship weigh anchor, and yourself mount with joy to return to the bosom of society,—only carrying with you from your desert island a few fragments to remind you of the time when you were solitary?"

But most of Vinet's literary articles concerned contemporary writers,—the poems of his friend Juste Olivier and of J. Porchat; *Christian Marriage*, by Mme. de Gasparin; and *Progressive Education*, by Mme. Necker de Saussure.

We can but detach a fragment or two from these studies, which are as remarkable for their insight into the hidden depths of human nature as for their elevation of moral sentiment. Vinet repudiates with some indignation Mme. de Gasparin's exaggerated interpretation of the text, "The woman is made for the man."<sup>1</sup>

"If a woman does not marry, she does not fulfil the end of her existence. . . . Marriage alone can make of her a normal and rational being. 'Woman is made for the man.' But what, is it the individual woman for the individual man, and not in a more general and more spiritual sense — *one sex for the other*? It is only the latter formulæ which can be taken as absolutely true. The first is only the complete form of the latter. We admit that a woman is placed by marriage in the most favourable conditions to fulfil her mission; but we dare not say that the woman who does not marry fails to fulfil it. . . . Who knows if, for a woman, it is not better accomplished by

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 9.

celibacy than by marriage? . . . That 'the woman has been made for the man' must not prejudice another truth, *that woman has been made for God*. . . . After all, women are men (*homines*). They are, as regards their Maker, in exactly the same position as men; and according to this point of view, which is supreme, the equality between the two sexes is perfect, as it is between the rich and the poor, the weak and the strong."

Vinet allows himself one or two playful gibes in the course of criticism; as, for example, when he reminds the authoress (so prompt to prop her arguments with quotations from Holy Writ), "that she would find it difficult to absolve St. Paul from the charge of having recommended celibacy;" and when he expresses the hope that in her future works "Port-Royal would soften and complete Geneva."

In Madame Neckar's beautiful book on education, Vinet complains of her treatment of the imagination, which she places beyond the pale of human faculties.

"And yet the imagination is in reality a normal and necessary faculty; it is the *spontaneity of the human mind*. . . . It is in vain that people seek to reduce science to the two crutches, observation and induction. The first of these acts, however passive it may appear, is necessarily preceded by an act of imagination. In order to observe, one must *imagine that one will discover*,—one must direct attention to a certain point, and in order to do that one must suppose something. All the progress of science is from hypothesis to fact, and from fact to hypothesis."

Passing on to France, the works of Casimir Delavigne, Béranger, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, Quinet, Michelet, St. Marc Girardin, were passed through the crucible of Vinet's criticism. M. St. René Taillandier was astonished to find Vinet anticipating Parisian criticism—notably in the case of Béranger. With the latter Vinet

had a long correspondence, which turned chiefly on religious questions; one sees clearly that the distance which separated him from Paris was even greater morally than materially. The only writer with whom he could keep up an intimate correspondence was his old friend Emile Souvestre. In one of his letters Vinet gently blames the note of sadness which is breathed by his books.

*To Emile Souvestre.*

"Your motives are superhuman. To be virtuous, sublime, devoted *quand même*,—this is the point at which you seek to arrive. This *quand même* soars at once above humanity and the gospel,—the gospel which, in raising humanity to its ideal, does not rise above itself. The gospel does not allow man to fall back on himself, and does not send him for all consolation and all comfort to the pure idea of his duty, his dignity, and his perfection. I do not know if such a system could hold, and if for not having wished to accept the consolations of the gospel one would not be reduced to accept inferior ones, because consolation is the first of human needs. . . . Your suffering, or the special form of your suffering, is pity,—a pity which is tender and nevertheless bitter. . . . The general condition of humanity provokes the reflection that nature has provided an insufficient sum of felicity, and reserved it only for a few, steeped for these in the sweat and tears of the great mass of their fellows. You need then for your own suffering, which takes the form of pity, and for the sufferings of others, consolation other than that which you offer. A reason is needed for the devotion of some and for the resignation of others. . . . You and humanity, you need in your destitution that convention with God which we call hope. Hope is so much a condition of life, a need of humanity, a virtue of the soul, that it does not appear possible that you do not propose some hope to others and to yourself. . . . But what is this hope? Do you believe that by means of increased culture, or a better distribution of social forces, the inequality will cease in that which is

truly iniquitous? I have not this hope; but if I had it, what would be the result? Simply that the period of struggle would be past, and that mankind could sheathe its weapons of will, of perseverance (I would willingly add, of faith), which it had hitherto employed. And who knows if, from the point of view of its highest interests, humanity would not lose more than it would gain? The hope of a social progress which would not be individual, and of a material progress which would not be moral, or even of a moral progress which would not be religious, can neither satisfy nor fill the heart. To give God to humanity, and humanity to God, such ought to be our immediate aim. It must not be said that when humanity is happy and enlightened, it will know God; but rather that *when it knows God* it will be enlightened and happy. (God is the way of wisdom and happiness. One must first find God; a personal and living God, a spiritual and visible God, a God who is infinite and accessible—a God-man. He alone can be at once a human God and the God of humanity. If God *is*, we cannot make of Him an abstraction, and act as if *He was not*. . . . The fundamental sin, it is to have willed to be something by and for ourselves. It was by this unique temptation of self-independent existence that evil began in the world. . . . Do not think that I would confound the man who abandons himself to the inferior instincts of his nature with one who strenuously resists evil and submits to the laws of conscience and of reason. Before long such a man will feel the need of God. The soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness will be filled. He who wills to do what is right will finish by doing the will of God; 'and he who would make known this will, will know,' says Jesus Christ, 'if my doctrine is of God, or whether I speak of myself.'"

We must not omit the mention of a writer who was especially dear to Vinet, Rudolph Toepffer, the brilliant author of the *Nouvelles Genevoises*, of which Vinet knew whole pages by heart. Nevertheless Vinet did not share all Toepffer's opinions. Toepffer, brought up among other



traditions, saw with more bitterness than Vinet revolutions follow swiftly one upon the other. Vinet was not an optimist, he dreaded as much as Toepffer the excesses of democracy; but he dreaded less its principle, and perhaps he discerned better the great laws which are accomplished in the midst of passing events.

*To R. Toepffer.*

"It is not my business to judge the Revolution of Geneva, nor to give advice to any one. But hope is such a good thing, and such a great force, that I should like, although the least hopeful of mortals, to advise it to every one."

One cannot fail to remark the religious tone which Vinet imparted to all literary criticism. He complains that Béranger's morality is—

"without principle: made up of instinct and tradition. Lamartine's intellectual self-complacency, if one can employ such a term, affects his religion as well. His religion affords too little scope to reflection to be able to take the place in life it ought to take. Conscience and reason are not sufficiently nourished. This kind of religion gives neither bread nor meat, but a delicate perfumed 'blanc manger,' which every one is glad to taste, but on which one could not live."

Vinet goes on to say—

"he would fain warn the poet himself, although we know too well that truth does not arrive easily to the ears of kings; and who is king—who has inherited the dangerous privileges of royalty, if it be not genius? But if genius is greater than we are, truth is greater than genius, and genius is no more dispensed than we are from the duty of listening to it and yielding it homage."

Sometimes his tone becomes still more severe. A

verse from the *Prométhée* of M. Quinet excites these remarks :—

“Is not Pantheism here, with its most extreme consequences and its most hideous aspect? And can one picture without terror this *new God*, that is to say, God in His most perfect notion, identified with songs that deny Him, with excesses that affront Him, and with attempts that outrage Him? Ah, how painful it is to meet such contradictions in such a work; and how well one recognises by this absence of all respect, the absence as well of the only conviction which can cause His holy name to be pronounced with the holy terror which is due to it!”

Vinet was not one of those critics who can only recognise the good and the true under a particular form. To a great sense of justice he joined a living sympathy for all that was human. It is only necessary to mention his manner of judging Catholicism, the eighteenth century, and Voltaire to prove the truth of our assertion. “The pleasure of finding fault is a poor pleasure; that of admiring is as lively as it is pure.”<sup>1</sup> His portraits are always true, and he derives from this truth itself a vigour and a grace which only belong to his pen. Sometimes a line will suffice him. “Many of Pascal’s paragraphs are the strophes of a Christian Byron.” *Appropos* of the narratives of Xavier de Maistre he writes: “One could give them for device the words of Horace: ‘*Nardi parvus onyx*.’” Speaking of Châteaubriand: “The author calls the situation of René ‘the vagueness of the passion;’ one might also call it the ‘passion of the vague!’ . . . It is by means of words that M. de Châteaubriand exercises his prestige.” This is how he sums up Werther: “He is true, but somewhat common. The pity which he inspires is scarcely touched with respect.”

Vinet excels in characterizing the style of the writers

<sup>1</sup> Vinet.

whom he criticizes. The personal dignity of Corneille has never been better seized than by the following:—

“This enthusiasm, these powerful impulses, these profound compassions, this art which causes the flow of generous tears, these *monumental* words of which vile paper is not worthy, and which ought to be inscribed on pages of bronze or of marble,—all this, is Corneille himself.”

Let us read also this appreciation of Voltaire:—

“His lively, brilliant prose is wanting, so to speak, in *body*. It is delicate and easy, but thin, meagre, facile, and without majesty.

“*‘Légère et court vêtue elle marche à grands pas;’* but one does not feel the earth tremble beneath her, and each touch awakens a metallic clatter. It has the vivacity which comes from the mind—rarely the warmth which comes from the soul. It sums up, but it does not concentrate; it never descends to the hidden depths of things, as does the prose of Montesquieu. It has the effect upon me of a piece of wood which one endeavours to sink in the water, and which persists in coming to the surface. It is without faults, but it is lacking in essential qualities.”

In another place this critic shows us M. Victor Hugo:—

“Stirring in their depths the soil of the national idiom, and convoking the ‘last reserve’ of the French vocabulary with a power and an authority which remind us of Rabelais.”

Again, it is M. de Lamartine whom he causes to pass before us: “He is always magnificent, but it is the magnificence of a spendthrift.” M. de Lamartine reminds us of the Cléon of Destouches, who—

“would throw his gold from the window if he could not find some one to whom to give it. Good cheer, blazing fires, noisy joy, and, under a disguise, ruin seated among the guests, and proposing with a mocking laugh a toast to the prodigal. And we who are also guests, we contemplate

with terror the extravagant expenditure of our host, yet we do not cease to aid him to devour his goods, because life is always pleasant at this opulent table, where even the scraps are exquisite."

The religion of the same writer is expressed with equal felicity :—

"Catholic in the ancient cathedrals, pantheist in the forests, agreeing by turns with the rationalists and the orthodox, Christian because his mother was Christian, philosopher because he lives in the nineteenth century ; but always, we must admit, touched with the beauty of God, resounding as a living lyre in contact with the marvels of creation, pouring out his heart with the simplicity of childhood *and of genius* before the Invisible Being whose thought at once oppresses and delights him."

With regard to Vinet's style of writing, M. Scherer considers that it underwent two distinct phases. "In the *Memoir on Liberty of Worship* and in the first volume of *Sermons* he was more or less classical, but afterwards he became more ingenious, more expressive, more *recherché*, and, at the same time, less simple and severe, permitting himself some of those *jeux de mots* which St. Paul, Tertulian, and Augustine did not disdain.

"It is worthy of attention that, with so impressionable an æsthetic organization and so indulgent a disposition, Vinet was yet able to maintain the decrees of Christianity in their incorruptible purity. The literary sentiment is readily pagan, evangelical belief is readily Puritan ; but Vinet has taught us that the austerity of faith can be allied to the most delicate and lively taste for literature. His catholic sympathies were open to all that is true and holy everywhere ; he loved to recognise the broken, dispersed rays of divine light, and he felt drawn towards every man in whose heart the moral fibre had begun to vibrate."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

*Letters to Friends.*

1844-1846.

To some of his more intimate friends Vinet did not hesitate to open the whole of his mind.

*To M. Verny.*

"You have believed me to be narrow, hostile to spontaneity and to the development of human nature,—I for whom the Christian is not perfectly Christian if he is not also perfectly human! You have not understood that I was only trying to see how certain developments of human life could harmonize with certain dogmatical views *which till then were mine*, and which appeared to be yours."

To his friend Thomas Erskine he expressed himself with still greater clearness:—

"On many points which are considered to be important I cannot speak with the Church. It is true that I am not obliged to do so, and that I ought to speak as I think; but if one ought to teach a conviction, can one in the same way teach doubt on important subjects? My doubts are instinctive rather than reasoned or scientific; and I ought to admit that there is more than one of my views in favour of which I have not in a clear and decisive manner the witness of Scripture. Thus I cannot believe in substitution, and I am able to speak theologically against it. . . . I am well persuaded that such a heresy would never compromise my salvation, inasmuch as my heart would be

given to God. But it would be necessary to pronounce publicly for or against it. Can I do so, not being one of the learned? Could I, even if I were so?"

In the course of this letter, Vinet thanks Erskine for a parcel of books:—

"Trench's sermons are very striking—far above the ordinary run of theology and preaching. . . . Arnold interests me deeply, even by the views that are opposed to mine. At any rate, he is a distinguished man, a specimen of the best variety of Christian humanity. I cannot tell you how many precious things I have gathered from the first volume of his *Life and Letters*. But allow me to tell you that I owe much more to a book that comes from you, although you did not send it, *The Brazen Serpent*."

Vinet's strong dislike of all views which tend to create a barrier between religion and all that is noble and sweet in human nature and in human existence, is displayed in the following letter:—

*To a Lady, 3rd February 1845.*

"Believe that Christian wisdom consists first of all, not in compressing or repressing, but rather in extending. One does not proceed in Christianity from negation to affirmation, but from affirmation to negation, from love to hatred, from liberty to submission. God is love—let that be our point of departure. Let me remind you that Pascal has not only placed first of all the faith and the logic of the heart, but has maintained that they suffice for us. Philosophy and nature are on the side of the gospel. The gospel alone among all these doctrines is at once philosophical and natural."

In answer to one who had confided to him his spiritual difficulties, Vinet writes:—

"Pray, do not think that you have shocked me. I have less than any one the right to be so; and the superb

assurance of those who believe without examination scandalizes me a great deal more than the vacillations or even the errors of a humble heart that doubts and seeks. Be consoled! *You would not seek if you had not already found.* It is thus that in an unpublished page of Pascal's, Jesus Christ speaks to the sinner. . . . I am not in a hurry to see you perfectly clear respecting the exact formula of the dogma of redemption; if, while seeking, you recognise your state of sin, the absolute need of pardon, the indispensable necessity of grace, I am well content. To believe, in the gospel sense of the word,—it is to prostrate yourself before God; it is to call for pardon (even supposing it had not been decreed); it is to demand a Saviour even when one ignores that one exists! The prayer of a soldier at the beginning of battle—'O God, if there be a God, save my soul if I have one!'—if not a ribald jest, was a grand saying. The humble soul still seeking may utter a similar prayer: 'O my God, if there be pardon, redemption, salvation, I accept, I claim them. I do not understand the form under which they are presented. . . . I only understand my misery and Thy great mercy.'

. . . "The Incarnation is the essential point: God manifest in the flesh—God with us—God united to human nature—God giving Himself after having given to us that which was not Him. It is the summing up of the gospel, the light of life, the unique consolation and the unique hope."

But it is to Erskine that Vinet unbosoms himself with the greatest freedom :—

"Many reforms are necessary. The principal must be brought to bear on the form as well as on the matter of preaching. *We must go farther: we must reconsider our theology.* In the midst of a new order of facts I do not perceive a single new idea, or, to express myself better, *a single idea.* I could not express how the uniformity that reigns in our sermons appears fictitious, superficial, and fatiguing. The preachers recite a chaplet of doctrines

much as the Catholics recite their chaplets of prayers. They are sincere, well-intentioned, but neither original nor profound, nor even convinced, if conviction means something more than prejudice. They declaim against the 'merit of works' without seeing that they themselves are imbued with the same spirit when they pretend to be saved by doctrines, which is an '*opus operatum*' like any other, and sometimes worse than any other. As for myself, I have many good reasons to keep aloof. *I have more than is necessary in the ten fingers of my two hands to count those who think as I do.* Christianity for me is not exclusively nor *par excellence* that which has been preached to us during twenty-five years. I believe that this formula is powerless and useless with regard to the masses: it is a *rechauffé*, almost cold, of the sixteenth century. That which was original in the time of Luther is no more so to-day. We speak a dead language to the century. Many people account for this result by saying that Christianity is not the affair of the masses, and I own that I do not know either in the past or in the present a converted people; but it is no less true that Christianity has acted on the masses, that it has created a Christian civilisation, and yet I see to-day that the masses are impenetrable to our efforts. But if I am not greatly mistaken, the new form of ancient and eternal truth is preparing itself in the human mind, and later the necessary man will be found. I greatly desire to learn your thoughts on this point. Here I can reveal mine but to few persons. 'All fear, none aid, and few understand.'

"Vinet has never clearly explained his views on the subject of the Bible. He furnishes many indications showing it to be no longer in his eyes a code of doctrines imposing itself with the necessity of a symbol. He even thanks God that we are not compelled to understand it, so that a place is left to our activity in the acquisition of faith. He realizes that there can be no authority in the Bible apart from that which is eternally true and permanent. 'The truths of the gospel are not



truths because *God has said them*; but rather, God has said them *because they are truths*.'

"Vinet had arrived at a sufficiently spiritual notion of revelation to be able to understand that Judaism had not been the *exclusive* preparation of Christianity, and to give to God the credit of all that is good in humanity. He goes so far as to say that men outside of the household of faith who have received the impulse of the Holy Spirit, 'are in better conditions than those who, knowing Jesus Christ, believe in Him with a literal and passive faith.'"<sup>1</sup>

Vinet's idea of authority can best be gathered from the following extract:—

*On the Question of the Sabbath.*

"The general character of the evangelical dispensation excludes literal legality; and if religion, in order to manifest itself, to give itself a body and a tangible reality, is obliged to use certain forms, these forms have not been prescribed by divine authority. . . . The legislator, the supreme organizer of the Church, is the Spirit of God. No path has been laid down for the future."

Religion, according to Vinet, has two bases: the Man-God, and the individual conscience called to enter into communion with Him. It is not to Christianity, it is to Jesus Christ that you must go. True Christianity is nowhere complete if not in Jesus Christ. Religion is presented to us in the gospel as a Fact, a Person, a new creation.

Here is a characteristic utterance whereby the intellectual side is closely subordinated to the moral and religious element:—

"To history, to systems, to Christianity, let us prefer Jesus Christ; let us be Christians by communion with Him, instead of by familiarizing ourselves with the doctrine

<sup>1</sup> Astié.

and the science which depend on Him. Speculations as to the nature of Christ, even the most sublime and the most necessary, are withering and destructive. If we imitate Him not, Jesus Christ will ever remain for us an enigma."

To sum up our characterization of Vinet during this last period of his development, we have only to add the following :—

"From first to last Christianity is morality. Speculation only enters in occasionally, and occupies the second place. Religion is nothing but morality sown on the soil of grace; it must be cultivated, and every theologian who is not a moralist is only half a theologian, if, indeed, he can be called one at all. . . . The need of religion, in order to be efficacious and fruitful, ought to have at its basis *the need of morality*.

"Conversion is only the beginning of sanctification, and sanctification is the continuation of conversion. . . . It is by the contagion of this moral element that truth not only shows itself, but that it communicates itself to the soul. . . .

"Morality and dogma are so closely connected that one can scarcely distinguish between them."

Every genius has its great artery through which its blood flows. With Vinet this "great artery" was incontestably morality.

CHAPTER XXX.<sup>1</sup>

*Lectures on Theology and on the Philosophy of Christianity—Lectures on History of Literature—Tenders his Resignation as Professor of Theology.*

1844–1845.

THE period during which Vinet lectured in Lausanne was a memorable epoch in the history of the Academy. The different chairs were filled by professors of rare merit; the teaching was of an elevated character; and the students responded by an overflow of zeal and of attachment.

Vinet's chair embraced the different branches of pastoral theology, that is to say, homiletics, the preparation of catechumens, and the theory of the cure of souls. To this teaching Vinet joined the history of pulpit eloquence,—a course of lessons on the practical philosophy of Christianity, and an exegesis of certain books of the Old and New Testament.

The professor often interrupted the course of his explanations in order to make, under the form of a sermon, a particular study of some important passage. It was thus, as we have already seen, that the *New Discourses* were born.

We may here insert a page from Sainte-Beuve which records the impression he received from one of Vinet's lessons.

"I owe to M. Vinet one of the most vivid and serious

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

impressions that I ever experienced. I had just returned from the Eternal City. I had seen in unusual splendour this superb Queen. St. Peter had appeared with an addition of golden baldachinos, with magnificent hangings and pictures where figured the miracles of a certain number of new saints that had just been canonized. From one of the balconies of the Vatican I had admired the far-off horizon of Albano. In presence of the Apollo Belvedere, I had seen our guide, the excellent sculptor Fogelberg, who had visited it every day for twenty years, let fall a tear, and this tear of the artist had seemed to me more beautiful than Apollo himself. A steamer transported me in two days from Civita-Vecchia to Marseilles, and from thence I flew to Lausanne, where I found myself six days after having left Rome. The morning following my arrival, I went to hear Vinet's lesson given in a poor college class-room, perfectly bare, with simple whitewashed walls and wooden desks. The Scotchman Erskine was there as well. I heard a lesson which was both penetrating and elevated,—an eloquence of reflection and of conscience on the subject of *Bourdaloue and La Bruyère*.

"In exquisitely concise language, serious, and yet full of inward emotion, the soul of a moral being laid bare its treasures. What a profound impression, intimate and altogether Christian, of a real and spiritual form of Christianity! What a contrast on leaving the pomp of the Vatican! Never have I tasted so fully the sober and pure joys of the mind, and never have I had a more lively sense of the moral sentiment of the intellect."

All who have heard Vinet are of the same opinion as Sainte-Beuve. They regret that the written word can never reproduce the accent, the look, the voice, in a word, the gift of utterance.

"Vinet," says one who often attended his lessons, "has only been entirely known to his pupils. Provided with a few notes traced on a card, the master began by an exposition of the subject of the lesson. Gradually the voice of the orator, always penetrating, although rather veiled at the beginning, soon resumed its power and charm; and

if in his improvisation the professor met by the way some great ideas which expressed his inmost being, then he gave himself up without reserve to the movements of his soul, his emotion gained the audience more and more, the pens fell from the hands, and there remained from those moments an increase of affection in the hearts of those who had the happiness to enjoy them."

But it was the course of Lectures on the Philosophy of Christianity which marked the culminating point of Vinet's theological teaching. The public know nothing of it save twenty pages which indicate the plan at the end of the volume of *Mélanges*.<sup>1</sup> A glance at this programme will suffice to show the purport of the work. What was the end the writer had in view? Nothing less than to confront, once for all, not in general terms, as Pascal had done, but point by point, feature by feature, human nature and the Christian religion. The table of contents (it is thus that Vinet calls his first lesson) indicates with what fulness the subject was conceived and was meant to be treated. If any will compare certain passages in the first volume of Sermons (1830) with the last pages of this Table of Contents, they will see the distance Vinet had traversed in the interval. It is once more the question of the relations of faith and reason. This is Vinet's point of view fourteen years later:—

"The practical interest of the study we are undertaking is the better understanding of Christianity in order that we may *believe better*. I have said to believe better, because in reality one may believe more or less well, in proportion as one has understood more or less well.

"This, I own, has greatly the appearance of a paradox, after having heard so many persons declare that 'not being able to understand, they could not believe,' and after having heard Christians reply in concert that 'they would understand as soon as they believed.' But it is

<sup>1</sup> *Revue Chrétienne*. E. de Pressensé.

easy to explain our meaning. In religion, as in everything else, the pretension to understand everything is an absurd pretension. To understand everything is to understand God; and he who would understand God would be God Himself. From cause to cause, from motive to motive, we must arrive sooner or later at a moment in which we say, '*This is because it is.*' If we will not make up our mind to utter this last word, if we are not satisfied unless we understand everything, it is plain that we shall not believe. Not to believe is to remain in *ignorance*, because in many things belief is the only means of knowing. . . . We must then believe in order to understand, but we must also understand in order to believe, or at least in order to believe well. If under the name of faith you designate a principle which renews the soul, faith ought to be a comprehension, an adoption of all truth by the entire man,—a harmony felt by the believer with what he believes,—an interdependence of subject and object.

"The gospel itself exhorts us to regard, to contemplate; but what will avail this contemplation if it lead us not to understand; or, at any rate, to fortify our faith, or to possess under this name something better than a superficial, ineffectual, illusory belief? It does not suffice to touch with the tip of the finger the extremity or the surface of truth. . . . No, *the truth must be embraced.* To *comprehend* means that it must be caught hold of and enfolded in the arms while the hands are raised in adoration. We do not lower faith; we do not profane the sacred mystery in speaking thus, because such an intelligence as that of which we speak, or, more correctly, such a comprehension, is neither easier to explain nor to practise than is anything else which it pleases you to call by the name of faith."

The central idea of the Sermon on Faith (the work of God) is found here, but enlarged and carried on to the highest application. This faith, which is a work, would be an incomplete, superficial, illusory work, if it was not also intelligence.

But Vinet's theological lectures only represent a part of his activity as professor. During the absence of

M. Monnard,<sup>1</sup> Vinet took his place at the Academy as Professor of French Literature. He gave a course on the history of literature under the Empire, with special reference to Madame de Staël and Châteaubriand. He was often obliged to begin his lessons by making excuses for lack of preparation. "Good," his pupils would say; "now we are sure to have a splendid lecture." His ill health could prevent him from giving his lectures, but not from giving them well. "I gave my lesson in agony," he said one day to his wife. Later in the day, Madame Vinet met a student, who accosted her, saying, "Monsieur Vinet is much better, is he not? he gave his lesson with so much vigour."

We may imagine that his lectures on literary subjects were given with more spirit than those on theology, for the idea of a moral incompatibility between his convictions and the chair he filled in the Faculty did not cease to torment him.<sup>2</sup>

We read in the Diary,—

"29th October 1843.—Communicated to Sophie my views on the necessity of sending in my resignation."

The more he reflected on the subject, the more was he convinced that his dignity, his conscience, and the future of the cause of which he was the representative, were in question. Legally he was free. As long as his teaching was in conformity with that of the gospel, no one had the right to examine his opinions on any particular point. But he realized that his position would become stronger and more logical when independent of the National Church. It was a sacrifice; but how can one have convictions if not prepared to make sacrifices for

<sup>1</sup> M. Monnard was obliged to make a long sojourn in Paris in order to collect material for the continuation of Jean de Muller's history.

<sup>2</sup> Rambert.

them? This sacrifice alone would be more eloquent in the eyes of public opinion than all the eloquence of the pen. These considerations gained the victory.

On 11th November 1844, Vinet addressed to the State Council a letter to the effect that conscientious motives obliged him to resign the post of Professor of Practical Theology.

The same day he wrote,—

*To M. Forel, 11th November 1844.*

“My heart is big with tears that cannot flow, although I have acted, it seems to me, with full knowledge.

Maintenant pour tout prix de mes soins superflus,  
Je me cherche moi même et ne me trouve plus.

Besides, it is not oneself that one must seek; because, when found, what would it be? One must seek Him who is ever seeking us, from whom we fly by a thousand paths.”

“The Council sent one of its members to engage Vinet not to send in his resignation immediately, but to defer the step on account of the state of public affairs and the excited condition of the public mind. Vinet thought it his duty to comply with this request. But too many people had been admitted into the secret for it to be kept. To those who expressed their surprise, Vinet replied simply as he did to a friend, ‘What I have done, I did in order not merely to appear but to be in the right path. God will take care of the rest.’

“It was currently reported in Basle that Vinet was going to join the dissenters. This proved how little they understood him. Vinet was so disinclined to be mewed up in a small, narrow sect, that he actually refused to participate directly in the work of an association which was formed to propagate his own ideas on the separation of Church and State. He only appeared at one of the meetings in order to make the following declaration :—



“‘I come to pay homage to the double principle of spontaneity in things of religion and of autonomy in ecclesiastical matters. . . . I do not desire to see the Church destroyed, but liberated,—associated in spirit with all who work in the same sense. Nevertheless, I shall go on working alone till I receive a new order from God.’

“Here we must record an instance of Vinet’s extreme delicacy of conscience. After quitting the Assembly he wrote the President the following letter :—

“‘I perceive that I have spoken more absolutely than I had intended. I had only meant to say that until the arrival of a new order of things I would work in my own name, but I did not wish to imply that I would not continue to form part of the great society of all who follow the same end. It is not spiritually but formally that I remain alone, and this point of view does not imply the condemnation of any combined action.’

“This declaration, made less than a month after his letter of resignation, shows us plainly of what stuff he was made. He would have neither party, nor sect, nor coterie, and the term partisan was of all others the most painful to him. He wished, not only in theory but in practice, to create individualities, men truly free, and it was in order to be so himself, to avoid all appearance of disagreement between his life and his convictions, that he had tendered his resignation.

“The students who knew him thoroughly did not mistake his motives for an instant. On New Year’s Day (1845) Vinet found his salon adorned with fine engravings, which were accompanied by a touching letter, expressive of his pupils’ affection and gratitude.

“A few months later the Revolution, which Vinet had long foretold, burst forth.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

*The Revolution of 1845—Downfall of the Government—  
Vinet preaches on the Accomplices of the Crucifixion.*

SINCE the Revolution of 1830 the country had been governed by the *Doctrinaires*.<sup>1</sup> Idealists rather than practical statesmen, they had sought only to enforce the law, without making allowance for the passions of the rebellious multitude, or even for those of their proper adherents. Their error consisted in imagining that this law could at their command incarnate itself in the soul of the people, and become the rule of its morals and of its institutions.

The Vaudois Revolution of February 1845 was less a political than a moral and social revolution. It was not the substitution of one form of government for another, but the insurrection of the mass against all superiority.

<sup>1</sup> *Doctrinaires*: the school of Guizot, of the Duc de Brenles, and of Royer Collard, who wished to found government neither on the principle of aristocratic nor of popular government, but on the principle of *Reason*. Where was this principle to be found? Guizot found it in a small number; in the bourgeoisie, in all who could contribute a certain sum and become electors. Vinet, on the contrary, had small hope of any permanent good resulting from the action of the middle class. "The monopoly of power by the intermediate class will not bequeath anything great to history. A Republic which is purely bourgeois will only perform bourgeois acts. *It is to the aristocracy, or to the frank democracy, that all that is sublime in politics is reserved*; and if it be true that the time of the aristocracy is passed, the bourgeois policy will never rise above itself but by becoming popular."

The Radical party was tired of what it was pleased to term the Methodist doctrinairism of the Government. The question of the Jesuits was the pretext, but in reality it was against order, against civilisation, against what was termed the aristocracy of morality, that the adversaries were arraigned. The revival of religion had doubly irritated the democracy, first by its self-righteous tone, and secondly by the reception it had met with from the upper classes of society. It was against religion itself that the popular fury was directed. The "Jesuits" or the "Mômiers," it was all one. At the time that they demanded the expulsion of the Jesuits, they endeavoured to excite the people against the Protestant Jesuits,—the "Mummers,"—and they included in the circle of their displeasure the whole of the teaching body. "Down with the Academy!" was the cry. It was looked on as the source of all the trouble and sorrow in the canton.<sup>1</sup>

A monster petition was set on foot. More than 30,000 signatures were appended. The Grand Council had scarcely had time to deliberate before the popular agitation rose and spread throughout the canton. The Council of State called out the troops; but, seeing that it was impossible for it to maintain a bloody struggle, it gave in its resignation, and a Provisional Government was set up, February 14.

The new Government commanded all public functionaries to recognise its authority. Vinet, as well as the

<sup>1</sup> Here we may quote from one of Juste Olivier's ballads,—

Messieurs, dit un bon campagnard,  
Toutes les vignes sont gelées ;  
Les blés furent semés trop tard,  
Nos forêts sont envolées.

De la Dôle jusqu' à Jaman,  
Ecoutez donc cette infamie,  
Nous n'avons point eu de choux cette année :  
*C'est Messieurs, c'est l'academie.*

greater number of his colleagues, obeyed. A few days later he denounced "certain emblems" in the streets of Lausanne, which gave pain to honest people, calling forth hatred and contempt with regard to "certain opinions and certain classes of citizens."

The Revolution soon bore fruit. It was evident that with regard to religious liberty everything was to recommence, that the ancient spirit of intolerance was awakened more violently than ever, and that the Government had neither the courage nor the desire to repress it. Religious assemblies were disturbed in several parts of the canton. Not only were the dissenting chapels assailed, but the "*oratoires*" in which the pastors of the National Church presided at the services were attacked with the same violence. Bands of men armed with sticks entered these buildings and dispersed the worshippers, assaulting women and aged persons, and doing much damage. Grave conflicts between the Government and the clergy were inevitable. The law of 1839, which had delivered the Church to be the humble servant of the State, was now bearing fruit. Vinet's heart was wrung in witnessing the decadence of his country.

"The people will it," he wrote. "These words sum up the law, the politics, and the morals of an immense majority. . . . I do not understand the divine right of the many any more than the divine right of one. . . . In many cases right and truth would be sacrificed if they should become questions of majority. A thing wished for by the greatest number does not by that fact become either right or social; it can be, on the contrary, execrable, and subversive of all social order; and even if it were wished for by a majority of *all against one*, it ought not to be."

The first step taken by the Government was to address a letter to the Separatists, who were "amicably invited

to abstain from meetings which disturb the public peace." This, then, was the point of view of the new Government. The persons who "disturbed the peace" were not the members of the yelling mob which paraded the streets, but the two or three gathered together in a quiet room for the study of the Scriptures. One of the "Mummers" retorted that it was exactly as though he were being "amicably invited to abstain from serving God."

Vinet endeavoured to—

"convince the Council of two facts—first, that it was impossible for the civil power to deal with the subject of religious belief; and secondly, that the new Constitution ought to pronounce in favour of religious liberty. To keep silence was to deny this right. If the legislators do not pronounce in this sense, to what a pitiful rôle will the National Church be reduced! For it is *in its name* that they will persecute. Must the Council, in order to vote for or against liberty, wait to ascertain the wishes of the people? The people only wish legislators to vote according to *their conscience*.

"Whatsoever may be said to the contrary, it is to those who respect themselves, not to those who only respect the people, that esteem is assured."

Other voices cried from all parts of the canton that the Methodist sect compromised the public peace, and they declared loudly that there must be but one form of State religion. The former legislation in matters of religious liberty had had for result: 1. A National Church in which the ministers were subject to the central political power. 2. No liberty either for parish or pastor. 3. All religious meetings save the public services of the National Church absolutely forbidden.

Vinet gave vent to the sentiments inspired by passing events in two sermons which were preached in the Church of St. François (Lausanne) on two successive

Sundays.<sup>1</sup> These sermons, entitled "The Accomplices of the Crucifixion of the Saviour," were not only a remarkable study of this mysterious text (Heb. vi. 6), but also a Christian appeal to the whole of Switzerland. Never had Vinet been more truly eloquent—with that eloquence of the prophet recalling the people to God and to duty.

"What do I hear, and what have you, too, heard?" he cried (alluding to the bloody struggles which had recently taken place in different parts of Switzerland<sup>2</sup>). "A piercing cry of sorrow, in the midst of which are distinguishable the moans of despair of those whose fathers, husbands, and sons have been removed by a tragical death.

"What have I seen, and what do you see, my brethren? Men who call each other true and faithful confederates, men who have taken the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for witness and guarantee of their alliance, rushing forward, not in order to embrace, but to destroy one another: the blood of brethren shed by fratricidal hands in this country that calls itself Christian, and a new Rachel, the Fatherland, weeping for its children, and refusing to be consoled because they are not.

"And long before these scenes of horror and of mourning, have we not seen and heard much that ought to cover us with shame when we recall that our God is not a God of confusion, but a God of peace. Let others judge between the combatants—the ministry which I accomplish at this moment dispenses me from the performance of such a function. I accuse no one in particular, but I accuse all. If we have been constrained to see these fearful scenes, it is because we are not that which we pretend to be; it is that, taking us in *the mass*, we have nothing that is Christian about us but the name. We can no longer deceive ourselves; the covering, to speak with the prophet,

<sup>1</sup> 30th March and 6th April 1845.

<sup>2</sup> For a long time a considerable party in Switzerland had been agitating to make an end of the Switzerland of 1815. The call of the Jesuits to undertake public instruction in Lucerne caused the storm to burst.

is too narrow to envelope us, and our uniform of soldier in the army of Christ can no longer disguise us. . . . It is of the piety of individuals that the piety of the public is composed, and just as a family of pagans cannot form a Christian family, a people cannot be Christian if formed of families that are not Christian. All is real, all is substantial in the kingdom of God. Fiction has there no place. In order that the people be Christian, we must each of us begin by being so; and if Christianity alone can save our country, the care of saving it regards each of us. What has each of us done to save it? What has not each done to lose it? '*Nothing*,' you will say, perhaps; '*nothing in either sense, for each of us is of small importance in the mass.*'

"Who has told you this—what do you know about it, and, in every case, show me how the mass can become Christian if you are not so yourselves; and tell me who ought to make a beginning if not each of us, equally and indistinctly? Do you consider it more reasonable that each should wait in order to be Christian till every one has become so? But every one having this right to wait, one would wait eternally. Turn your gaze upon yourselves at the sight of these national calamities. Accuse yourselves, and without refusing to the victims of your miserable discords the compassion which is due to them, keep some of it for yourselves."

These two discourses made a great sensation. The Radical press demanded by what right Vinet preached in the National Church, of which he denied the moral right to exist. Vinet replied that his controversy was with the intervention of the State, that he bore no ill-will to the Church to which he belonged as an individual.

"A thousand sentiments bind me to the Church of my fathers. As I write, the beautiful chimes of our cathedral announce the hour of divine service. What do these sounds say to so many differently disposed persons? As for me, they touch me as deeply as ever. But even the monument from which it spreads in the air belongs en-

tirely to the past . . . the grand unity of the Middle Ages is no more than a souvenir or a dream. But that does not hinder the fact that the sound of the cathedral bells brings tears to my eyes."

A few days later, the Grand Council adopted a resolution which had been proposed in order "to put a bridle on the excesses of the Methodists." It was to the effect that "all salary from the Treasury was to be cut off from those pastors who officiated in religious meetings other than the legally constituted services of the National Church."<sup>1</sup>

On the following day Vinet tendered his resignation as professor of theology. In the touching letter of farewell which he addressed to his pupils, he explained the motives which influenced this decision.

"I believed that I was called upon to bear witness on behalf of a sacred principle—the principle of religious liberty in general, and of the sacred and inviolable liberty of Christian ministers in particular." Vinet goes on to say that he was "never more firmly attached to the Church of his country than at the moment that he ceased to be numbered among its functionaries."

*To Emile Souvestre, August 1845.*

"Do you wish to see a revolution upside down?" wrote Vinet. "Come here then and witness the spectacle of a people wearying of its happiness and revolting against civilisation. We are promised a magnificent future, towards which we march over the ruins of our liberties. The multitude is indifferent, for what does it care for

<sup>1</sup> We can better understand the scope of this infamous resolution if we pause to consider what would be the effect of such an enactment on any other religious body—for example, on the Anglican Church.

Bible classes, temperance meetings, communicants' guilds, Sunday-school unions, mission services, girls' friendly societies, young women's and young men's Christian Associations, and missionary meetings, would all be abolished at a stroke.



liberty? It has more than enough for its poor aspirations. . . . I believe that the Mind which has put unity into the world watches over our destinies, and will bring forth unity in the world of will. The circle of universal truths will complete itself; human conscience will be enriched as science is enriched, but our progress will be slow and stormy. I should be horror-struck did I not know that One is at the centre of all this movement, holding events in the hollow of His hand: One towards whom, knowingly or unknowingly, all creation turns with deep sighing, uttering the tender and reassuring name of Father."

The difficulties of Vinet's position caused his foreign friends to hope that they would now succeed in drawing him away from Lausanne. From Montauban, Basle, Geneva, and Paris came new and pressing invitations.

It is probable that these overtures would have been accepted but for the fact that at the same moment the chair of literature became vacant at the Academy of Lausanne owing to the retirement of M. Monnard, who sought refuge from a political career in the calm life of a country pastor. Vinet was called to take his place.

*To M. Faesch, 21st May.*

"Dear friend," wrote Vinet, "you know that I have sent in my resignation as professor of theology. . . . I wished release from a position in which silence concerning my convictions on political subjects would be no longer imposed on me. I would not continue to be the functionary of the Established Church, as part of the duties attached to my charge obliged me to consider myself to be. Finally, willingly or unwillingly, I was believed to represent a theological system with which in many points I was no longer in agreement, or rather on which all my convictions are not fixed. These motives are of long standing: circumstance has only brought them to light. . . . Providence has willed that at the same moment my friend Monnard's vacant place should be offered to me; and what is more remarkable, the Government has made the offer

even more pressingly than the Academy, which manifested a disposition to *question my vocation*."

The President of the State Council, on the contrary, expressly stated that this call was founded on the European reputation which Vinet had acquired by his writings. Vinet was thus restored to the Academy at the moment in which he was leaving it. Although he was no longer their professor, he did not entirely abandon his friends of the Theological Faculty. Many of them assembled regularly once a week in his house to continue their exercises in pastoral theology.

But for the future his true pupils were those of the Faculty of Letters, to whom he delivered courses of lectures on the history of French literature and on the poets of the century of Louis XIV.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

*The Council of State and the Clergy—Resignation of  
160 Pastors—Vinet's Letters.*

1845–1846.

It was not long before the Council of State found occasion to put the docility of the pastors to the test. They received orders to read the draft of the new Constitution from the pulpit on the morning of Sunday, August 3, 1845. There was no time for the pastors to consult and organize a scheme of action. About forty refused to obey this arbitrary behest, basing their refusal on the fact that "the law restrained the publication of official acts from the pulpit to those bearing on religion or on religious ceremonial." They received for reply the information that, in the National Church of the Canton of Vaud, the "ministers of the gospel held office from the civil authorities," and that in consequence they were bound to obey. Still they stood firm, some even refusing to allow the proclamation to be read by a civilian, and inviting the faithful to protest against it by leaving the Church. The Council of State invited "the classes" to pronounce judgment.

Vinet watched the struggle with ever-deepening interest. His first care was to make the public understand the strange rôle to which the *State Episcopate* had reduced the clergy.

This is how he defined it in a piquant article which appeared in a local paper :—

“Who was it who told us that zeal is the essence of the ministry, and that a ministry without zeal cannot be better conceived than a fire without heat? It was a mistake. The establishment of the ministry is only a preventive measure against religious zeal. . . . The ministers who understand their true mission will reduce themselves little by little or directly (for why should one linger?) to the commodious office of public crier and official master of the ceremonies, or to something resembling the rôle played in our funerals by the personage called ‘le prieur’—because he does not pray! Only, in his case, he does not even make pretence of so doing, and a minister ought at least to have the appearance of praying at church. Nowhere else, of course.”

The classes pronounced a verdict of acquittal; but the Council had the right of final judgment, and the incriminated pastors were suspended. As soon as the suspension was pronounced, the pastors united at Lausanne to deliberate. After two days of discussion, 160, *i.e.* the majority of the clergy, tendered their resignation.<sup>1</sup>

While the pastors were in conclave, the Council was sitting at the Château. After examining the declaration of the ministers, they decided that “the subordination of

<sup>1</sup> They alleged the following reasons :—

“1. That forty-two pastors had been punished for having refused to read a political proclamation from the pulpit.

“2. That this was done in defiance of the law, and in defiance of the sentence of absolution of the classes.

“3. That contrary to the Constitution, which says that the law regulates the relations that exist between Church and State, the Church is ruled despotically, and, instead of being united, it is now subject to the State.

“Furthermore, civil magistrates usurp the right of occupying the pulpit by their agents, in order to read political proclamations during the hours of divine service.”

the Church to the State is the inevitable condition of their union." A member of the Council rose to declare that although "regarded as a divine institution Christ was the Head of the Church ; as a human institution it needed a human spouse, and that this spouse was the State."

Then he proceeded to denounce "the exaggerated pretensions of the pastors who wished to treat with the State as a co-equal Power. It was the position of the Pope *vis-à-vis* to the Emperor ; it was Adrian IV. forcing Frederick Barbarossa to hold his stirrup. Was the State Council to 'hold the stirrup' for the Vaudois clergy ?"

This display of oratory was received with vehement applause.

Vinet's letters enable us to follow him during this momentous crisis.

*To L. Burnier, 9th November.*

"Scholl, Esperandieu, and Des Combaz gave in their resignation this morning ; the former preaching on Matt. xvi. 18, the two others on Acts xx. 24. . . . The churches were full. Esperandieu's sermon affected many to tears. But not more than Scholl's, who only bestowed on his present position a few calm, almost cold, words at the end of his discourse. . . . I do not venture to make conjectures. The issue may be great, and it might be little. One thing is more and more evident for me. It is that the national institution is everywhere disproportionate to the state of the world and of the human mind, and that the Church ought to rise to the spirit of the apostolic age. The religion of God, cramped in the swaddling-clothes of the Establishment, imprisoned in forms, hindered in its progress, compressed in all its enthusiasm, cannot enter the lists with the worship of Satan, which advances *free*, erect, the head in the air, proselytizing with ardour, opposing apostles to our clerks, obeying, as all true ministers should, a vocation, not

exercising a trade. Unless spontaneity is opposed to spontaneity, I do not know what will become of religion."

There was a divergence of opinion, of interests, and of views between Vinet and the greater number of the pastors who resigned their office. He considered the Church in the general and more elevated sense of the word as the spouse of Jesus Christ—the link between heaven and earth. The pastors, on the contrary, fixed their eyes on the National Church of Vaud *and its parsonages*. When Vinet learned that the clergy were preparing for united action, he did not hope for any great result.

"The question to be solved," said he, "is purely individual. To make of it a question of majority is to distort it. I hope but little from assemblies, and least of all from this one. Our pastors are worth much more in *tête-à-tête* with their own consciences than in company with those of others. . . . It is true that an idea has been brought forward which, without changing the state of hearts, might completely change the face of things. It is, that if all the pastors were to retire at once, the State would be embarrassed, and finally it would be forced to tender its arms to the Church, that is, to the clergy. I do not know whether the plan would succeed, but I know that it has been conceived by some wiseacres. *I would prefer anything in the world to such tactics.*"

*To L. Burnier, 12th November 1845.*

"I have just heard that after two days of deliberation 160 ministers have tendered their resignation. . . . I should have preferred 20 to 200. . . . Forty resignations well given would have benefited the gospel, the religious life of the country, and the principle of the independence of the Church, better than 160."

This was Vinet's first impression, but a subsequent letter showed us that he had reason to modify his opinion.

"14th November.

"There seems to have been more force and more simplicity of heart than I had at first supposed. 'God was there,' Scholl says."

"15th November.

"I come back again to my doubts and fears. I honour the assembly and all its members. I honour their intentions; but I believe that they have acted on impulse, and that many at this moment are astonished at what they have done. I should have liked the resignations to have been well considered as well as numerous. I should have liked them to have come from men capable of conceiving the idea of a Free Church, and ready to put their hand to the work. But the great majority of the 'non-jurors' only wish to save the Establishment by forcing the hand of the Government. It is a political movement issuing from the clergy! O religion of Jesus Christ! O spiritual worship! O peaceful and silent asylum of souls!"

In order to present the complete expression of Vinet's ideas, we must add the following lines from the *Semeur* :—

"At the risk of appearing severe, we have said what we think of the intimate union which exists between the unjust sovereignty of the Government and the ecclesiastical sphere, and to which, according to our judgment, the clergy have opposed too little resistance. . . . But the actual conduct of the pastors is a precious commentary on their preceding conduct, and obliges us to believe that there was in their acceptance of an ecclesiastical code nothing worse than an intellectual error. . . . From the moral and social point of view, the pastors have rendered to their country an inestimable service.

"Victims of duty, they are also its witnesses and guarantees. Their sacrifice has strengthened on its trembling basis the morality of the citizen. Liberty and law have not received in the Canton of Vaud a more striking homage since the Revolution of February. It is not a political movement, although the action of the pastors has a political bearing, because it is a protest against the

exercise of arbitrary power. It is another proof that Christian principles well followed are the principles of order in the State as well as in the Church."

On the 25th November, the Council of State informed the pastors that in forty-eight hours they must withdraw their resignation or submit. The question was posed with brutal frankness. It was declared that the "*Union of Church and State in the Canton of Vaud is not on a footing of equality, but that it implies the subordination of the Church to the State.*"

It was repeated again and again that the National Church was nothing else than the nation, and that whosoever retired from the National Church ceased to form part of the State, and renounced his right of citizenship.

Vinet had foreshadowed these consequences in his Essay on the Manifestation of Religious Convictions, when, seeking to deduce the logical result of the maxim, "the State has a religion," he added,—

"Whosoever has not the State form of religion is not a citizen; and if he will be one (*i.e.* a citizen) at any price, he must join a form of religion which is not according to his convictions."

Thirty-three ministers made use of the forty-eight hours conceded to them for reflection to make their peace with the State. The rest held firm.

The following excellent *résumé* of the political and ecclesiastical situation is found in a letter from Vinet's pen:—

*To M. Roepcr, 1st January 1846.*

"The little country for whose sake I quitted Basle has been given up for a long time to the action of blind, brutal forces, hostile to civilisation.

"When the *coup de main* of December 1830 tore the



power away from a party without morality, and gave to the country a Constitution based on absolute equality of rights, the Government fell into honest hands. We had a Council of State composed of men sincerely attached to the cause of civilisation, taken in its most elevated sense. Many of them were sincere Christians. They imagined themselves accepted by the people, and gave themselves joyfully to the work of developing education and morality. But the people, dragged in a direction contrary to its instincts, followed its lead without love and without conviction. A party was formed which sought to render all progress odious. Radicalism had representatives in the State Council and also in the Great Council. Besides, even wise men became, unwittingly, a little radical, and turned federal interests into party questions. This radical faction aroused in the people a terrible enmity against the religious revival, qualified by the name of Methodism; and this element of opposition served more than once to unite men who were altogether opposed to one another in political matters. One has seen a man rise on the shoulders of an adversary in order to get out of the ditch, and this is what one sees here. An impious proselytism was carried on in town and country. There was perhaps not much to destroy. Religion with the people was scarcely other than a cold, dreary formalism, the churches empty, the ministers despised. The Revolution was made with the cry of "Down with the Jesuits;" but on the same day arose the cry, "Down with the Mômiers," and it was understood that it was against them—against Methodism, against pedantry, against the aristocracy of morality—that the Revolution had been made.

"The Vaudois ministers, having accepted in 1839 an ecclesiastical law which consecrated the servitude of the Church, and having refused to the laity any share in the government, have borne the penalty of the illiberality of their principles, or rather of their absence of principle. . . . The subordination of the Church to the State has been erected into a principle. The clergy have at last grasped the position which they ought long ago to have understood. They have felt themselves wounded *as a body*, and a great

number have resigned their functions, some few succumbing to a calculation which they ought not to have made, and hoping to place the Government in a difficulty which would force its hand.

"The question now is—*Will the Establishment survive this blow?* I believe that it will.

"Another question is—Will a Free Church be formed by the side of the Establishment? I believe this also; but in the beginning it will be as scanty in numbers as it is rich in the piety and zeal of its leaders—nearly all the flower of the clergy.

"Many of the pastors have a superstitious fear of an ecclesiastical Establishment independent of the State: they have not as yet realized the philosophy of their action, and are Nationalists in the marrow of their bones. They have this in common with Radicals who are also Nationalists, not from love, but from hatred of Christianity, and because uniformity appears to them to be an admirable refrigerant of godly zeal. . . . Nationalism, or the theory of the *Church Nation*, is materialism in spiritual matters, and the system gives way in every detail. . . . These events have affected my own position. In 1840, I renounced the position and the rights of a minister of the National Church. Last year (1844), recognising that the Faculty of Theology, although secular in intention, preserved relations and some solidarity with the Church, I sent in my resignation as Professor of Theology. . . . Later, the chair of French Literature having become vacant, it was offered me by the Government. It would be difficult for me to tell you all that my resignation has cost me. I left an ancient parish, and disciples who showed me great confidence and filial affection. Professor Chappuis has also tendered his resignation. The Academy is as much hated as is *Methodism*: and it is as much against the one as against the other that the Revolution is made. Indeed, *before* the ecclesiastical events of which I speak, it had resolved to resist. . . . Many professors will certainly be dismissed,—among others Charles Secrétan,—guilty of not having taught Hegelianism. How will all this end? I cannot tell. The revolutionary movement continues and mounts. The people consent.

As long as only rights, liberties, and principles are sacrificed, they will not complain, but will rather applaud. It will be quite another thing when they have to pay down in ringing coin the costs of the escapade of 14th February. But even then the burden will fall on the rich, and, by means of a progressive tax, a kind of agrarian law will be realized. The moral good of all this evil is nevertheless great. The circumstances in which we are placed ought to form political character and develop the religious spirit. It is a great punishment, but it is also a great lesson. We have assisted at the victory of instincts over ideas. We shall now see that of ideas over instincts. . . . As you speak of our pastors with so much interest, I will tell you that the generosity of their sacrifice merits, according to my idea, the gratitude of the country to which they give a great example, the esteem of good men of all nations, and the sympathy of Christians. They have rendered service to the grand cause of liberty of conscience, although they hardly yet understand all that is involved in this principle."

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

*Marks of Sympathy from England—Formation of Free Church—Persecution—Vinet's Moral Authority.*

1846.

THE cause for which Vinet and his brethren were fighting was not one of merely local interest. From all parts of Europe flowed letters of sympathy and encouragement. In Scotland meetings were convoked in order to consider what measures could be taken to cope with a persecution which was a disgrace to the nineteenth century. Soldiers, lawyers, and professors, as well as pastors, joined in petitioning the British Government to address a remonstrance to the State Council of the Canton of Vaud. By desire of the General Assembly, the Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland sent a letter expressive of sympathy, which was brought to Lausanne by private hand. Similar addresses arrived from France and Germany; but the most astounding manifestation of sympathy was a letter signed by 403 of the clergy of the Anglican Church, expressing the interest and admiration awakened in England by the fidelity of the Vaudois clergy.

At the same time Lord Aberdeen addressed the following letter to the English Minister in Switzerland:—

“I do not hesitate to authorize you to express the feelings of profound regret with which Her Majesty's Government has received your report,<sup>1</sup> as well as the conviction

<sup>1</sup> On subject of persecution of ministers.

that perseverance in such a course must sooner or later engage the canton, and even the Swiss Confederation, in new troubles, and materially hinder the progress of civilisation."

In response to a counter-petition which the Council of State hastened to lay before the British Government, Lord Aberdeen declared that—

"Her Majesty's Government is incapable of comprehending how a particular form of legislation can be considered as justifying an abandonment of those first principles of civil and religious liberty, whose maintenance distinguishes the civilisation of Christian States."

Vinet's correspondence at this epoch resembled that of some of those great bishops of former days towards whom were turned the eyes of Christendom.<sup>1</sup> But nearer and more pressing needs absorbed the best part of his time and attention. It was necessary to provide for the maintenance of a great number of families; because many of the pastors in sacrificing their position had also sacrificed their means of subsistence, and found themselves without resources at the beginning of a rigorous winter.

Vinet drew up an address, signed by several persons, which declared that the burden of privation which the pastors had taken upon themselves must be shared by the whole Church. "We make common cause with you, and we must also share a common purse."

Vinet's next care was to issue a pamphlet on the subject of the new position in which the pastors found themselves placed.

"They have only resigned their official functions: they remain pastors, that is to say, they do not abandon the care of their flocks, or, at all events, they do not renounce

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.

the exercise of their ministry. This resolution is the germ of the Free Church. The fact has preceded the principle; but the principle will not be slow in coming to light. . . . The first affair, the sole preoccupation of the Church, in this solemn moment ought to be to exist,—to exist, say I, and nothing more,—that is to say, to be born.

“For that which has been called a Church was not really one at all. The hour has come to establish a true one. Some will ask if I mean a sect of dissenters. Certainly not; at least not in the sense which we generally attach to this word. The forms of dissent which are known among us have principles which this Church will not have. We must admit that it will be ‘dissenting’ with regard to the National Church, just as the national Church is ‘dissenting’ with regard to Catholicism.<sup>1</sup> But this new Church will be a so-called Church ‘of multitude.’ Let me define this term. A Church of multitude is one to which one can adhere without having submitted previously to an examination testing the spiritual condition of the candidate.

“State Churches belong to this category; but that which distinguishes the Church which I have in view from State Churches are spontaneity, liberty of choice, and, above all, the abolition of the fatal formulary—‘Cujus Regio, hujus Religio.’”

But how was this to be brought about? Listen to Vinet’s answer:—

“Day after day to achieve what God permits us, *neither less nor more*; to remember that all great things have had small beginnings, and that many little things have had great ones; to hold obstinately neither to form nor to number, but in every way to truth; to tell oneself every day that Jesus is in the midst of ‘two or three’ as well as of a hundred or of a thousand; to aim at doing good rather than at making a noise; to follow, without urging the

<sup>1</sup> Nor must we forget that Rome was herself the first dissenter. Her arrogant pretensions were the cause of the schism which rent asunder East and West.

Divine Providence, but to follow step by step, to understand, and to obey. For the rest, to live peaceably, submitting to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; to see in the refusal to obey, not the rule, *but the exception*; to hold aloof from all politics; and to make of the sanctuary an asylum of solemn devotion and of peace."

It was thus that the Free Church of the Canton of Vaud was called into being.

The fundamental principles of this Church were as follows:—

"1. The 'Free Church' is a *Church of multitude*, composed of all persons domiciled in the canton who belong to the Reformed faith by the fact of their baptism and their admission to the Holy Communion. The confirmation of baptismal vows dispenses from the necessity of making any other decision.

"2. The Church is founded on the word of God, according to the principles of the Reformation.

"3. The Liturgy of the Church of the canton is adopted in public worship.

"4. The Church has an existence of its own, and is governed by the bodies named by her members. The expenses of public worship are defrayed by the voluntary gifts of the faithful."

Its first days were difficult. The members of the new Church met together in the drawing-room of some of the more wealthy members of the flock. The poor hesitated to enter.

*To Louis Burnier, 1st December 1845.*

"We shall never do anything without the poor," wrote Vinet. "Nothing is great, nothing is strong, save that which begins by the poor."

As long as they were deprived of public buildings, the Free Church presented an aristocratic appearance which injured its progress. Other difficulties came from without. The "oratoire" was assailed one night by an armed

band. At Montreux fire-engines played their hose against the attendants at the Free meetings.

In a circular addressed to the Municipalities, the Council of State alluded to—

“the establishment of a Church *calling itself free*, whose professed doctrine was nothing short of the Methodism which had already done so much harm in the country.”

In reply, the ministers put forth a declaration to the effect that their faith was the same as that of their fathers, and that they adhered firmly to the sovereign spiritual authority of Christ and of His word in the Church, and to the divine institution of the evangelical ministry. By the Act of Separation they had become more closely and intimately united to the communion of the Reformed Church. They had expressed their need of marking their sense of communion with the universal Church, and, by making this their main point, they cleared themselves of all suspicion of sectarian tendencies.

By way of reply, the Council of State seized the occasion to make use of its powers. The decree of 2nd December forbade every religious meeting outside of the National Church. At the same time the theological students were put to the test. Some sixteen or twenty received from the President of the Ecclesiastical Commission letters by which this magistrate invited them to fulfil pastoral functions in the parishes to which they would be sent. The majority of the young men—disciples of Vinet and of Chappuis—decided to cast in their lot with that of the non-juring clergy. They asked the pastors to provide for the continuation of the theological lectures, and to name a commission of examination and of consecration. Accordingly, M. Chappuis was called on to continue his course of dogmatic, and M. Vinet of pastoral theology.



In spite of occasional fears, Vinet was full of joy and gratitude at the thought of this new Church, which seemed to realize an ideal he had never dared hope to see pass into the region of fact.

"I do not wish anything," said he, "or rather I make a rule of desiring nothing save that there may be developed among us religious spontaneity and the sentiment of religious responsibility."

As is generally the case, persecution only served to strengthen the bonds it tried to break. Each day some new progress was made.

*"February 1846.*

"I spoke just now of my unhappy country," he wrote. "It is certainly unhappy; but do not doubt but that a country which affords scope for persecution is certainly not abandoned by God. Persecution has caused the good seed to sprout, and all the country is covered with fresh verdure. If you know the Christianity of this country, you will see how simple, practical, and human it is, removed from all spirit of sect and of fanaticism. It is just this life of God in the soul, morality itself, which is attacked. It is not dogma that is persecuted. Dogma has not even been called into question. It is its maxims and examples which are disliked. I hope that good will come out of all this. Neither the Government nor the people will succeed in overturning the Free Church which is being formed, and of which the worship till now is only celebrated in private houses. They will succeed in expatriating some of our best citizens; many have already left us, and emigration is on the increase. But a kernel of resolute and humble Christians will remain, who, at the cost of some suffering, will render to Christianity and to civilisation a country which has been rudely torn from both. These little meetings, in which the most honoured citizens take part, are visibly blessed. Here and there they are dissolved—here with the hose of the fire-engine, there with stones, elsewhere legally and officially. But

they are too numerous and too frequent for the greater part not to be left in peace."

The indirect but real services which Vinet hoped to gain from persecution did not prevent him from doing all in his power to reconcile his fellow-citizens with religious liberty. He addressed a "petition to the Vaudois people," in which he declared that one form of liberty alone was wanting, namely, religious liberty,—

"the noblest of all liberties; the only one that is perfectly disinterested, for it is the liberty to do that which is pleasing in God's sight—the liberty to obey.

"During the last ten months it has been no longer possible for honest citizens to serve God according to their consciences. Everything else is freely permitted. Taverns are open from 8 A.M. to 10 P.M., and the wives weep and lament, yet no one dreams of closing them, while meetings where, instead of drinking, prayers are offered to God, are looked on as infamous resorts which must be closed. If the best of liberties, religious liberty, was popular in the country, can you believe such things would be possible?

"What, I ask, is the utility of intolerance? I defy you to find a single good side to it. I defy you to show me that when people have been ill-treated on account of their religious opinions, our fields have become more fertile, our purses better filled, our souls more contented, our rights more assured, our Government stronger. We shall have satisfied the spirit of hate, that is all. If persecution becomes established and legalized, what will happen? Read history; be on your guard. Show your good sense and your good heart. You are free; be also *just*. You are the masters; obey duty's voice. Become the servants of right, of justice, and of truth."

Vinet was no less plain-spoken in a pamphlet addressed to his non-juring brethren, some of whom clung firmly to the idea of a National Church.

"The State," says Vinet, "is organized civil society, and not a spiritual society of believers. Civil society which

excludes no one, and only excommunicates crime, is primarily composed of individuals whom we are accustomed to designate as *natural men*. Could such a State frankly and loyally make official religion depend on the austere beauty of the gospel, which demands that the flesh be crucified *with its affections and lusts*?"

Vinet's moral authority in the canton was too considerable to escape criticism in the newspapers. He was regarded as an important factor in the religious revolution. The heart swells with indignation on learning that he did not escape personal outrage.<sup>1</sup> A meeting (29th March) at which Vinet was present was summarily dismissed. He uplifted his voice to claim some consideration for the women and children. The police inspector, exasperated by the interference, cried out, "Seize Vinet; arrest him; lay hold of the man!"

Happily, the agents had the tact to avoid the grave scandal which would have been caused by such a proceeding.

On the 8th July took place the first consecration of pastors.

"I must not forget a piece of news," wrote Vinet on the morrow of this memorable day, "namely, the ordination of three young ministers—first-fruits of the Free Church. The ceremony was a beautiful and touching one. The meeting was not disturbed, as the place and hour had been kept secret. Would it have been interrupted otherwise? Perhaps; but, generally speaking, persecution is dying out. After all, I fear some successes as much as some reverses, and we have still progress to make in the love of the Invisible."

<sup>1</sup> The order had been couched in the following terms:—The Prefect of Lausanne summons the religious assembly, which will take place at M. —, to dissolve immediately.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

*Vinet as a Preacher—Extracts from Sermons.*

VINET, who had rarely occupied the national pulpit, preached constantly in the new Church. His superiority as a preacher was more marked than in all the other spheres of his activity.<sup>1</sup> That which constituted the inimitable charm of his style was less the talent it displayed than the fidelity with which it expressed a noble and saintly personality. He had, too, one characteristic which dominated all the others; we mean sincerity. One scarcely remarked his rich, sonorous voice, the native nobility of his gestures, the keenness of his reasoning, the abundance and originality of his thoughts, the exquisite taste of his delivery,—one was absorbed by something newer and more powerful. The secret of the charm that held one spell-bound lay in his absolute truthfulness. One saw in Vinet a man who entered the pulpit because he had something to say. One felt that what he gave was himself—his life. Humility gave birth to simplicity, and simplicity to the most exquisite naturalness. He sought to put in practice the duty of evangelization, which he recommended to his colleagues as the first great duty of the moment. He preached at Lausanne, at Morges, at Montreux, at Coppet in Mme. de Staël's salon, and frequently in Geneva,—a town which held personal attractions in the shape of his son engaged in a printing house, and of his friend M. Edmond Scherer.

<sup>1</sup> Scherer.

Some of the sermons of this period have since been published in book form. The characteristic points of Vinet's later teaching reveal the new spirit which animated him. Religion is no longer a science, a system, or an institution; it is a virtue, a principle of life deposited in the human soul.

"Religion is neither a law nor a doctrine; it is a fact which unites the heart and the will of man to the Author of his being. . . . Religion is not so much an idiom which one must learn to talk fluently, *as a life which must be appropriated by action*, and our soul ought to offer to holy truth a home rather than an echo. . . . It is a life added to life; it is the life of our soul; it penetrates the latter as intimately as blood is united to the flesh it sustains and nourishes."

"We come now to a point which establishes expressly the dynamic character of Christianity in opposition to an intellectual conception."<sup>1</sup>

"The religion of the gospel is a force, a sap diffused throughout all life. . . . It is not a system of reasoning; it is a *fact* which takes possession of the heart and prevails over the acts."

Vinet no longer classifies the diverse manifestations of the Christian life. "He has grasped the fact that *it is one* in its principle and in its effects, and that by analysing it one runs the risk of reducing it to a mechanism. A notion of salvation which was so religious as that of Vinet's, by which eternal life is none other than the life of God in the soul, this notion no longer permitted the establishment between salvation and the renewing of the inner life of the distinction which characterized his first conception."

Not only can there be no pardon save that which

<sup>1</sup> Astié.

regenerates, but pardon and regeneration are confounded in the unity of spiritual action.

This spiritual action is faith, which consists of embracing the person of Jesus Christ, and of entering into communion with that life which emanates from Him. By life we mean also pardon, salvation, regeneration, sanctification; but those who make an inventory of the fruits of faith lose sight of the synthetic character of religious phenomena. This is what Vinet himself has excellently expressed in the Studies, entitled "*The Look of Faith*," and "*Grace and Law*."<sup>1</sup>

In the first sermon, which has for its text Num. xxi. 9, Vinet passes over the historical fact.

"'The Look of Faith'—the vivifying virtue of the look of faith—is the subject of these reflections.

"The object of the look, namely, Jesus Christ crucified, comprehends all the gospel.

"In Jesus we contemplate God in the fulness of His attributes, for it has pleased Him that all the fulness of His divinity should dwell substantially in Christ, and for the first time He has revealed to the world the immensity of His love. This is the object which the gospel offers to our gaze; but there is in this gospel a central point, a supreme moment which is the principle of a new moral life. This central point, this supreme moment, is the sacrifice.

"We will not say that there is in Jesus Christ nothing of value save His cross. . . . Jesus Christ did not come on earth only to die. He taught, He wrought miracles, He discharged the different relations of human life; and the gospel, by presenting other remembrances than those of His death, has presented to our gaze Jesus Christ as a whole.

"We know that it pleased His Father that all fulness should dwell in Him, and that He has been made wisdom, justice, sanctification, *because He has been made* redemption. You cannot seize these things save by the light of the cross. . . . He who neglects this fact (Jesus Christ

<sup>1</sup> Scherer.

crucified) misses the end to which He aspires. . . . It is not to the publication of the maxims of Jesus Christ that salvation is attached, but to His incarnation, His humiliation, His sufferings, and His death, and consequently to the look of faith, which puts all these marvels within our reach. . . . Who would ever have believed in the holiness of the law without this bloody expiation, in the profound evil of humanity without the application of so violent a remedy, in such mercy without such a sacrifice? Jesus, victim, accredited Jesus the physician,—the priest introduced the prophet.<sup>1</sup> . . . All Christ's life was a passion, a prolonged dying of which the cross was only the culmination. Leave to this Divine Head all that He cannot communicate to us. His divinity is His alone, but His humanity is ours. . . . The virtues that He displays on the cross are human virtues in their perfection; they are proposed for our imitation; His example forms our heritage. All His life bore the same character as His death. He was faithful, obedient, patient, charitable from the beginning of His history, but without the cross we should not have known this. . . . That which alone has determined so many generations to make of the cross the symbol of their faith and of their civilisation, is that they have seen there the last word of God concerning Himself and humanity.

“What are the happiest moments in the life of man? They are the *sublime* moments, by which I mean, those in which the soul unites itself by admiration or by sympathy to that which is good, great, and generous. . . . The soul is only completely happy when, in union with its principle, it forgets itself, and becomes with regard to God a mirror, an altar, and an echo.

“The noblest speculations are often in danger of occupying us too much with ourselves. . . . But the look turned towards Jesus has a contrary effect. As long as we gaze

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to M. de Brenles this passage occurs: “It is not only in dying that Jesus Christ has revealed to us the love of God, it is in being born, and in living our life. Could we have believed that He to whom philosophy gives the icy name of the Infinite and the Absolute was in all the force of the word our Father and our Friend, if Christ had not deigned to become man?”

upon Him, He excites in our soul a holy enthusiasm, a holy love, and He renders these dispositions habitual to our heart. . . . In the Lord's Supper the gospel is reduced by an image to its fundamental idea—it is the gospel itself in miniature.

“Man, lost in the first Adam, would not be saved by the second, if the second were not a ‘living Spirit,’ enabling him to rise to ‘newness of life.’ It is this resurrection which is the true salvation.

“‘Grace and Faith,’ Eph. ii. 8.—The act destined to place us in communion with the thoughts and will of Jesus Christ ought to be a moral act. Faith is a desire as well as a homage, faith is a promise, it is almost an affection. It is all this, and at the same time it is all that is most simple, a look of the heart turned towards the God of mercy, a serious and vehement consideration of Jesus Christ crucified, the abandonment of all our interests into His divine hands, the peace of the heart resting in the certainty of His love and power, our hand placed confidently in His, as in that of a protector and guide. Such is faith. It may have for its point of departure an historic certitude, but this certitude is not faith; it can take the form of a philosophical theory, but this theory is not faith. It may halt in the state of opinion, but this opinion is not faith; it can reduce itself to a popular prejudice, but this prejudice is not faith. To believe,—it is to confide oneself to God, to rest upon Him. Thus Abraham believed, and it is this faith alone which was imputed to him for righteousness.

“‘Jesus Invisible.’—The first of the graces of the new alliance is faith, the second is spiritual affection. Even the enemies of Christianity have a kind of love for Jesus Christ. The affection of Peter was not spiritual; that of the world for Jesus is still less so. It (the affection of Peter) was a human attachment which did not suffice for Jesus, and which He could not accept because it did not contain the principles of the new life that He came to pour out upon humanity. . . . In a word, this affection could not lead the soul to God.

“‘Philosophy and Tradition,’ Col. ii. 8.—The enemies



of Christianity do not dare to separate themselves absolutely from Christ,—it is in the name of Jesus Christ that they make war against Him. The cynical incredulity of the last century is no more in season. Christianity may be only a phantom, a vain name; but one has to count with this phantom. It is not only to-day, it is from all time that the adversaries of Jesus Christ have sought to *diminish* rather than to crush Him. Whenever they have succeeded in robbing Him of a single ray of His glory, the result has been a thick darkness in the midst of which you hear the lugubrious voice of humanity crying: ‘*They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.*’ This revelation is the tradition above all others, but there is yet another tradition of God in the succession of holy lives which adorn human history. These lives are Christianity itself; because Christianity, although it has flowed from a doctrine and is written in a book, is essentially a life welling eternally from the bosom of God. This life, perpetuated in the lives of believers, is also a revelation, a tradition, a divine witness. The philosopher, marking the marvellous harmony uniting extreme differences of time and place, cannot fail to recognise a fact worthy to be weighed in favour of the Christian religion.

“I doubt if it enters into the counsels of God to close entirely the mouth of incredulity, and to make religion as capable of proof as an arithmetical problem. Were this the case, good intentions, earnestness, and meditation would count for nothing, and the ‘search for truth,’ which exercises the different forces of the soul, would cease to exist. If all those who profess the mystery of the fulness of Christianity believed with a living intense faith, it would not be necessary to put them on their guard against philosophy and the tradition of men.

“‘The Stones of the Temple.’—The universe is the most holy and the most magnificent of temples. But this also must perish in accordance with the eternal principle of divine government, *i.e.* that matter has only been created to serve as the instrument of the Spirit, and that the Spirit alone issued from God, and is capable of union with

Him,—the Spirit alone is immortal. Of this temple, as of all others, there will not remain one stone upon another. ‘*What is it that ye look for?*’<sup>1</sup> Patient investigators of the mystery of nature, do we pretend to condemn you? Certainly not, if it be the Spirit that you seek in matter, if across the visible you search after the invisible. But if it be not so, it is to you that Jesus Christ addresses the question. You will answer, ‘It is not merely phenomena that we look for, it is a law; and a law is a thought.’ Will you say positively that it is the thought of God? If not, we will say that it is yours; that it is your sagacity, your penetration, your spirit of discovery, and that, consequently, it is on yourselves that you have looked, so that the whole of nature has become nothing but a mirror for the pride of your intelligence. Men must be told that if their subserviency to matter be a degradation the subordination of morality to intelligence is another degradation, and that the most intellectual man, if he be nothing else, is only an *intelligent brute*,—that the triumphs of a demoralized intelligence are not essentially different to the triumphs of brute force, and that the excessive admiration of genius takes its departure from the same principle as the lust of the eye, included by an apostle in the same condemnation as ‘the lust of the flesh and the pride of life.’ Modern idolatry has raised two altars,—one to matter, the other to intellect. In the delights of the mind as in those of the senses, the heart withers, and man becomes cruel. There are so many things that can be judged only by the heart, that when the heart fails reason itself becomes unreasonable. In order to know to what degree the heart gives intelligence, and to what degree the worship of the intellect lowers the same, one has only to place face to face with a case of conscience an intellectual and a pious man,—‘Thy law, O my God, giveth wisdom to the simple.’

“Oh, I need to rest my eyes, weary of so much dazzling emptiness; my heart hungers for reality, and reality is there with you, poor woman,<sup>2</sup> despised of men but approved of God . . . ; but above all with Thee, O divine Saviour!

<sup>1</sup> Literal translation from French Testament.

<sup>2</sup> The poor widow casting her mites into the treasury.

It is in Jesus Christ that the Spirit triumphs over the flesh. . . . Can you look at anything else when love is there? Love is the glory of the Spirit, the glory of God; and He in whom dwells supreme charity represents supreme magnificence. . . . Christianity can only be understood and received as the reign of the Spirit and triumph of the invisible. . . . But Christianity has taken a form in the world, it has become visible; it has become great (as the world counts greatness). To regard only the intellectual and material greatness of Christianity,—is it not to gaze on *stones*? Vast thoughts, secular traditions, striking recollections,—are they not, after all, cold, dead, hard, and material? The living stones are the sincere and loving souls whose life is hid with Christ in God.”

The sermons entitled, “The Faithful filling up the Sufferings of Christ,” “Spiritual Affection,” “Perfection,” “Wrath and Prayer,” deal with the practical aspects of the Christian life.

“‘The Faithful filling up the Sufferings of Christ.’—It is not only by the sufferings endured on Calvary that Jesus Christ saves us, but by the sufferings of His life, which was all a Passion; because He was delivered for our offences from the moment He opened His eyes to the pale light of our sun, and bore His cross in bearing our sinful flesh. But Christ has not come by His sufferings to dispense us from suffering, nor by His death to dispense us from dying. It is at the cost of suffering that the Church remains united to its Chief,—that the Church is the body of Christ. The Church is nothing else than the Man of Sorrows, perpetuated in the person of those who are united to Him.

“‘Spiritual Affection,’ Col. i. 8.—The Church brings a message of love<sup>1</sup> to the world; but, oh strange difference!

<sup>1</sup> Extract from a letter :—

“July 1844.

“That which the gospel has come to declare to the world—the sum and substance of revelation—is that ‘*God is love.*’ *Love cannot help loving.*”

“November 1845.

“I rest in peace on this assurance, ‘*God is love.*’ Love is His essence;

... When in one of the cities of the ancient world—Rome, Ephesus, or Colosse—men embraced the doctrine of the cross, it was as the apparition of a new humanity; and as their perfume betrays the presence of flowers, some odour of life and of eternity, some spiritual emanation, drew all eyes towards this new society which made no noise, and which, without this pure and subtle perfume, would long have been unknown. What were the striking marks which caused them to be recognised by the world? By this among others, that they loved *in the Spirit*. Turning our eyes towards the modern Church, we behold them rich in liberty and in resources; but, alas! we can no longer say, 'See how these Christians adore, how they pardon, how they love!'

"These are the marks of Christianity; not vain attempts 'to wind ourselves too high for sinful man beneath the sky.'

"'Perfection,' Col. ii. 20–23.—Neither to the right hand nor to the left, children of the promise, but on high. On high—that is to say, in the practice of all the duties that God has given you to fulfil; on high—that is to say, in a simple love for Him whom you have loved, and in the assiduous search of His glory at the expense of your own; on high—that is to say, *here below*, in tender and zealous obedience, in a humility which is truly humble, in this childlike simplicity which agrees so admirably with the reason of the mature man, and in the intelligent acceptance of the gifts God has given you and the truths He has taught you. What matters it that we believe much if our love remains small? And in whom do we believe if we do not love? In Jesus Christ. But in what Jesus Christ? It is certainly not in the Jesus Christ of Bethlehem, of Bethany, of Gethsemane, and of Calvary; it is in a

love is the principle of all that He does; love is the supreme reason which has made Him emerge from His solitude to communicate with His creatures. Nothing can contradict, annul, enfeeble this word, which is the life of the universe and the light of our darkness. *God loves; 'God is love.'* . . . I believe it, because He has filled with His love the abyss which separates His divinity from our humanity. The Man-God makes me believe in God."

fantastic Christ which has none of the real Christ save the name. It is a Christ who has not loved, who has not prayed, who has not died. In our haste to be saved, we have only embraced a shadow.

“And how is the salvation of the world to be effected?

“All the pride of modern wisdom can be resumed in a word, the salvation of humanity comes from humanity. . . . Each nation is the bearer and representative of an idea; and each idea, in order to establish itself in the world, needs a nation to embody it. You say that if Jesus Christ and the soul meet, that will suffice. But how is this meeting to be brought about? When towards mid-day, under the burning sun, fainting and at death's door, you come to a river's brink, and a drop of water restores your drooping soul, you must not forget that it was the river that brought you the drop of water,—it was the river that saved you. In the same way, in a spiritual sense, it is the Church that saves you, because it is from her that you receive Jesus Christ. . . . Far from us be the Romish error teaching that it is the Church that believes in God, and individual Christians believe in the Church. We acknowledge with joy that the relations of the faithful with the Living Water, which is Christ, are immediate; but the Church, which is the Christian community in the succession of ages, is the torrent or the river which brings to you the name and the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and, so to speak, Jesus Christ Himself.

“Without the Church one would have neither Christianity nor Christians. You may say, ‘The Christian utterance of a friend, a single passage from the Bible’ (perhaps less than that) ‘have converted me.’ But what is it that had formed around you this Christian atmosphere that you have not been able to help imbibing,—what is it that had created in your heart these spiritual needs of which, before the gospel, one had not the slightest idea,—what is it that had prepared for this hour of silence and of communing with self, this mysterious action, this occult influence to which you have ceded? *It was the Church*; and, if you believe me, you will perhaps understand the importance that the apostles and Jesus Christ Himself

attached to the idea of the Church,—this living and continual personification of the mass of believers,—and the remarkable preoccupation which inclines the authors of the sacred books to speak of the Church when you would only have spoken of the soul. As a fact, your Christianity, however individual it may be (and it will never be enough so for my taste), is extracted—expressed, so to speak—from the Christianity of sixty generations; the Christian as well as the physical man bears in his veins the blood of thousands of persons. . . . The centuries and the nations have worked for each of you. Each is the heir of antiquity and the work of a whole world.”

CHAPTER XXXV.<sup>1</sup>*Studies on Blaise Pascal—Essay on Socialism—Dialogue.*

1846.

THE study of the writings of Blaise Pascal occupied much of Vinet's time and attention. The general direction of his work and the turn of his mind placed him in sympathy with this profound thinker. The author of the *Discourses* and the author of the *Thoughts* resembled each other in many respects. We find the same penetrating analysis of human nature, the same irony, the same passionate need of faith, the same powerful imagination in the Catholic apologist of the seventeenth and the Protestant apologist of the nineteenth century. If sympathy and natural affinity can be of any aid to the intelligence, it is certain that Vinet was peculiarly fitted to understand Pascal. It was the opinion of Sainte-Beuve that his articles afforded "the most exact conclusions to which one can arrive on the subject of this great genius."

In the first chapter of the volume, entitled *Studies on Blaise Pascal*, Vinet affirms<sup>2</sup> that it is unfair to represent Pascal as though he were in an habitual state of despair.

"The aspect of human existence is not bright for a profound nature. A certain degree of sadness is inseparable from a great power of reflection, but this is not a selfish sorrow; it is, so to speak, a sorrow of the intellect. . . . Does the man exist who has not asked himself—What am I?

<sup>1</sup> Rambert.<sup>2</sup> Fragment of a lecture given in Basle, 1833.

Whither am I going? . . . It is perhaps only a moment, —a lightning flash,—but there is room for unspeakable anguish . . . the higher one rises on the summits of thought, the nearer one approaches the region of sorrow. . . . It is only a Christian who can contemplate the miseries of human life with the bold gaze of Pascal, and yet know the joy of the soul. . . .

"The *Thoughts* were intended to form an apology for the Christian religion.<sup>1</sup> It may be regarded as the itinerary of the soul towards faith, or as the history of the conflicts by which it has passed, and of the slow inward process by which God has overcome its resistance and brought it vanquished to the foot of the cross. Pascal considers that we must begin by the study of man, and rise from it to the study of religion. Man's indifference to religion proceeds from the fact that he does not know himself—he is only great when he recognises his misery—the *misery of a deposed monarch*. That which specially characterizes man is the consciousness that he is not *in his right place*, and his aspiration towards light and happiness.

"Man respects the superior and divine part of his being—the soul. Nothing proves this better than his immoderate desire for the esteem of his fellows. He has an insatiable thirst for truth, and a deeply-rooted need of happiness. (Nearly all the unhappiness of men, according to Pascal, springs from the fact that 'they do not know how to remain quietly in their own rooms.')

"*Man is only great when he realizes his misery.* When a beggar feels himself miserable in comparison with a rich man, it is not a sign of greatness; but often a man who possesses all the advantages of rank and fortune discovers his misery, and this is a sign of grandeur, because it proves that his aspirations extend to the invisible world. . . . The misery of man consists in his dethronement, and his grandeur *in the consciousness of this dethronement*.

"Pascal does not attribute the evidence of mathematical certainty to the proofs of the Christian religion. . . . But if in course of my search for truth I find a religion which

<sup>1</sup> Vinet ascribes to Pascal the honour of having founded apologetics on the moral sense and on the needs of man.



offers a solution to all the problems of my nature, I can only know that it is true by the witness of my heart, and by the victorious but incommunicable demonstration of experience."

Later, Vinet was obliged to study Pascal in connection with the articles of MM. Faugère and Cousin, and particularly with regard to the accusation of pyrrhonism which the latter hurled at the author of the *Thoughts*. Vinet broke more than one lance with the brilliant Academician, and he found no difficulty in showing how little the philosophy of M. Cousin had understood the religion of Pascal.

"Faith possesses its object, touches, tastes, and unites itself to it; but neither authority nor syllogisms can give us, where the soul is the ultimate judge, a certainty which is proof against the attacks of reason. The best of arguments can only convince *with the aid of the soul*, and a thousand times one has seen doubt, hideous and sarcastic, appear at the end of a deduction whose links formed a perfect chain. . . .

"Men fondly deem that the intellectual conviction of the existence of a personal God is enough. . . . But it is of no avail to know God unless one also possesses Him, and one cannot really know Him without possessing Him. This is the tendency of the whole argument of Pascal's *Thoughts*, namely, the knowledge of God by the heart. This is the great affair, and we need not be surprised to find that Pascal did not wish for more light, and that he was content to let obscurities exist even in the centre of Christianity. If there were no obscurities, the heart would abdicate in favour of the mind, which had taken the first place; and abandoning the search for truth, it would leave man strutting in the midst of those empty forms and abstract notions which he calls knowledge.

"'Practise Christianity, and you will learn to know it,' this is Pascal's great idea. Try to live purely and honestly; be gentle and submissive to your inferiors; practise Christian morality; stifle the fire of your passions,

and silence the tempest of your worldly thoughts, and be assured that in this calm the voice of God will make itself heard. Try the life of Christianity, and you will soon be convinced of its truth; be Christian in action, and you will soon be a Christian by conviction: piety leads to truth, as truth leads to piety. In other words, the man who seeks to 'do the will of His Father in heaven,' will learn 'the doctrine.'

"Pascal introduces the proselyte who hungers and thirsts for righteousness to the feet of Christ Himself. Christ speaks alone to the disciple, and the disciple listens; neither man nor doctrine comes between Master and disciple: it is soul speaking to soul; it is the spirit bathing in the source of truth. God and man understand each other without an intermediary; Jesus Christ becomes His own apologist and advocate.

"Pascal distinguishes between the desire for salvation and the fear of hell. There is nothing noble in the latter, while all the nobility of the soul can be displayed in the former, which is the thirst for the living God. As to miracles, they have been rarely employed to convert: they were the reward of belief rather than its basis."

But it is in the article entitled "The Theology of the Thoughts" that we find all the richness of Vinet's appreciation of Pascal.

"The glory of the gospel is not only to be found in having made truth *divine*, but in having made it *human*. Jesus Christ is God and man, and it is the same with His doctrine: it touches by its two extremities the mystery of the divine essence and the mystery of human nature. The two elements, human and divine, are not the two terms of an antinomy, but two poles of truth. Revealed truth is only human because it is divine, and only divine on condition of being human. Man carries within him the twofold need of giving himself wholly to God and of remaining wholly man. . . . All heresies which are born in the bosom of Christianity either diminish man or God. The religion of the heart, which is a living faith, maintains an admirable equilibrium between

these two extremes, while theology has great difficulty in preventing itself from inclining towards one or the other. Why? Because it remains always below the summit of the angle, while living faith, which is throned on the apex, dominates the two sides, or two slopes, of truth without inclining towards one more than the other. Piety unites both by an ineffable procedure of which it is no more conscious than we are ourselves conscious of the union of thought and matter in our being,—union or conciliation that life manifests incessantly. It is the work of the theologian to distinguish between the two . . . and theology diminishes by turns divinity or humanity. . . . This conflict takes many different names, predestination and liberty, dogma and morality, the witness of the Word or that of the Spirit: but its identity remains the same. It is in philosophy the inexhaustible question of the subjective and the objective. Philosophy has not yet understood that the incarnation of the Word is the supreme and unique solution of the problem. For, by this fact, it is face to face with *impersonal reason*. The Christian believes in personal and supreme reason, which is Jesus Christ.

K.H.  
 "There are two manners of conceiving Christianity—(1) as the reign of visible authority; (2) as the reign of the Holy Spirit. The first says: 'The Church is directed by God: believe that which she believes;' the second says: 'You are all taught of God.' . . . In the judgment of some persons, all this is rationalism; for others it is pure mysticism; in our eyes it is simply the gospel. . . . The gospel can be nothing else than *spiritual*, otherwise the principle is denied which Jesus Christ established at great cost—the principle of the immediate relations of man with God, the glorious liberty of the sons of God; or, if we wish to speak in simpler language, of *religious individuality*."

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 Those who have understood the scope of Vinet's teaching will recognise its full development in the page we have just transcribed.

In the year 1846, Vinet was impelled to study

closely the principle and the effects of Socialism. His mind had been turned in this direction by the discussion to which his pamphlet addressed to the non-juring pastors had given rise. Vinet had declared in this article that the State was the *natural man*. A professor of theology at Zurich denied this assertion. Vinet replied by a letter which appeared in the *Reformation of the Nineteenth Century*.

"I will not consume in passing skirmishes the little force that is left to me. I reserve it, if some months of life are granted me, in order to present as a whole and under a new light the ideas of which the theory I defend is composed."

The work thus announced was none other than the *Essay on Socialism*.

Vinet himself presents us in the preface with an analysis.

"What is it that I have undertaken?" he asks. "It is to display the principle—the fundamental idea of Socialism, which is nothing else than the identification of man with society, and to establish, in opposition to this principle, that of the fundamental distinction, or of the duality of man and of society; to show how humanity, first enslaved and deposed by the priesthood, will seek to improve its condition by exchanging one form of servitude for another, by taking refuge in the arms of political Socialism; to show how the religions of antiquity, far from relaxing the bonds of Socialism, could only draw them closer, and why philosophy was powerless to prevail, and above all to popularize the principle of individuality.

"It was necessary, after having caused the reader to assist at the death of ancient Socialism, to give it the spectacle of the revival of individuality by the double action of the gospel and of invasion, and then to indicate some retrograde steps in this new career. Finally, it was necessary to point out the danger which menaces humanity by the extinction of this principle of individuality. This

last part of the subject imposed on me a double task : first of all, it was necessary to claim the rights of individuality, and to defend them against some objections ; and, secondly, to show how Socialism, by taking possession of modern thought, would be more false, more immoral, more irreligious, and more fatal than it has ever been during the ages of antiquity. Such was the subject-matter, and such is the plan of this article."

Of all Vinet's writings, none are so difficult to read as this essay. It needs great attention and application. Vinet recognised this, for we read in the preface,—

"I am not one of those writers who are *born translated*. I need to be interpreted, and this will be done if that which I have written be worth the trouble. If I have only known how to speak to a few persons, perhaps some one will take the trouble to make me speak to all. But I confess that on such a subject (Socialism) I ought not to have needed an interpreter."

In this essay Vinet sets himself to discover what individuality really is.

"The individual alone has a conscience, learns to know the truth, is capable of a second birth ; so that the restoration of fallen humanity can only be effected by him. Christianity, which is the author of this restoration, is altogether individual, but it has fallen in the midst of a society organized on the opposite principle: the Socialist principle, which is a result of the Fall, and society in appropriating it has changed its character. Hence Catholicism, the first and principal enemy of the individual and Christian principle. Hence modern Socialism, whose menaces are more serious still, and whose victory would cause us to fall lower than antiquity."

We have only time to glance at a dialogue, entitled *Hermas and Onesimus*, which may be regarded as Vinet's testament, his last word on a question that touched him

very nearly, namely, that of discussion between Christians. It concerns certain Gospel stories relative to the perversity of the disciples of Jesus who prevented those who followed not with them from casting out demons in His name. Hermas is amazed by this narrow-mindedness, this intolerance and slowness of comprehension. He is confounded by it. Onesimus is not so scandalised: he is confused on his own account. The conclusion of the dialogue tends to show that these failings are natural to the heart of man, and that Christians of all ages too often follow in the steps of these first disciples.

Onesimus asks himself if he has never felt sentiments of hatred in seeing the triumphs of injustice, and if there has never been a mixture of venom in his most righteous indignation. "The moment has come when we must not keep silence on the subject of the duty of mercy and that of intercession. I believe, *I feel*, that bitterness is always ready to overflow in a human heart—it flows at ease in the bed dug by indignation. One must have spent a long time in the school and in the company of Jesus Christ, one must have learned from Him to put many things under foot, one must be seated near Him, and able to view from above the interests and agitations of this life, if we would hope to escape the risk of mistaking hatred for a just indignation."

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

*Dismissal of the Teaching Body of the Academy—Literary Projects—Lectures ("New Evangelical Studies" and "Literature of the Seventeenth Century")—Failing Health.*

END OF 1846–1847.

WHILE Onesimus was pleading that bitterness should be replaced by love, an occasion presented itself for Vinet to put into practice the difficult duty which he had sought to enforce by precept. It will be remembered that he had been named member of the Commission charged to revise the laws relating to Public Instruction.

After many attempts at reconstruction by the authorities, a new law was put forth by the Grand Council. This was a terrible blow to the Academy. Liberty was sacrificed to popular prejudice, and the Academy became the slave of an unintelligent system. All the teaching body with one exception were dismissed.<sup>1</sup> No reason for this arbitrary step was assigned save in the case of Vinet, who had particular claims, owing to the fact that he held his nomination as Professor of French Literature direct from the hands of the Government. The motive given was drawn from Article 256 of the Law—which was framed to *remove from the Academy any professor known to frequent other religious assemblies than those of the National Church.*

<sup>1</sup> 3rd December 1846.

The students addressed a touching letter of farewell to their fallen professors.

"Is science to be no longer independent?" they ask. "Has the State the monopoly of truth? The artist can judge the merits of a work of art; the farmer, a question of agriculture; and, until now, scholars have judged the capacity of men of science. But to-day it is in vain that a man has talents and vast stores of knowledge; if his opinions do not please the majority, he is doomed. Learning is thus cheapened and debased, and the Academy will soon become the laughing-stock of Europe."

The letter ends with the noble words,—

"Let us have faith in the future. These are the last words of your pupils. They express the hope that never fades in a young man's breast, for it is faith in the power of truth, and in its ultimate triumph."

A few days later the students invited their former professors to a banquet. One who was charged to give the toast let fall an expression which was certainly excusable under such circumstances.

"The country," said the young man, "the country which has conducted itself towards you *as a stepmother*,—the country will return to you."

Vinet, charged to reply in the name of his colleagues, adjured the students to allow no bitterness to mingle with the harmony of these manifestations.

"If we cannot forbid the entrance of regret, let it be unaccompanied by recrimination and reproach. Let us only see in the act which separates us an event, or, better still, *a dispensation*. In mounting so high, the gaze can only encounter subjects of adoration and motives of confidence. . . . Ill-founded prejudices have arisen in the country against you, gentlemen, and against ourselves. They will not last. Let time do its work, but, above all,



let us do nothing to *justify this prejudice*. May the love of our country, devotion to the immutable principles of civil liberty, unfailing respect of law and of plighted faith, moderation, as well as weight of acts and words, characterise those who have taught and those who have studied in the ancient Academy of Lausanne. It is at this price that you will become, not men of a mere party whatsoever be the name it bears, but men of the future which beckons you, and of the Fatherland which counts on your help."

Thus terminated the struggle engaged—first quietly, then openly—between Vinet's official position and his convictions. He had retired from the ranks of the clergy and from the Faculty of Theology. But the logic of party spirit did not even permit him to remain Professor of Literature in the Faculty of Letters. It worked out its narrow consequences to the bitter end.

"8th December 1846.

"I have no plans, but I have a great wish—it is to pass one or two years, if God accords them to me, occupied in producing or in finishing various literary undertakings."

It was thus that Vinet expressed himself two days after his dismissal.

The works he proposed to complete were the *Evangelical Studies*, a work on Pascal, *The Philosophy of Christianity*, a French grammar, and, finally, *A History of French Literature*. They were already sufficiently advanced to have been soon brought to a close if leisure had been accorded him. But, as usual, it was just the leisure that was lacking. Students came to beg him to continue his lectures, and Vinet was able to prophesy that his winter would be more laborious than if he had not been dismissed.

It would be impossible to enumerate all the offers which reached him from different quarters. He was greatly touched by one that he received from Basle, which, under an appearance of modesty, veiled the generous desire of providing for him the leisure he craved.

*To M. Faesch.*

"The offer is all that is most generous and attractive, even too much so! I have not yet come to a decision. In any case I shall pass the winter in Lausanne, where I am retained, not only by the season, but by the lectures I have undertaken to give on theology and literature to the students, and on the 'connection of the sciences' to the girls of the 'Ecole Supérieure.'"

Some fragments of these lectures are preserved in the volume entitled *New Evangelical Studies*. The literature of the seventeenth century formed the subject of the second course, with Pascal as its crown. Vinet has told us the object and aim of the teaching that he gave to the girls' school. He desired to form, not *blue-stockings*, but well-informed, earnest-minded, and sensible women.

In the midst of these varied occupations Vinet's health caused increased anxiety. He grew weaker, and he was haunted by the presentiment that the end was near. At the head of his Diary of 1847 we read,—

"To practise how to die!

"No man can die well if he is not dead beforehand."

Soon Vinet's life became an hourly struggle between illness and the need to act. From day to day he was less and less able to bear food. It often happened that he rose to give his lesson and retired to bed immediately afterwards. He worked in his bed. It was there that he wrote or dictated for the *Semeur* an article on

Jaqueline Pascal,<sup>1</sup> and two or three on the *Chansons lointaines* of Juste Olivier. On Thursday, 28th January,<sup>2</sup> he addressed the theological students on the text, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou hast given me to do," and terminated by these words,—

"May we each of us take possession of these words so as to be able, at the term of our existence, to say with humility, and in the sentiment of our entire dependence on His Father, who is also our Father, 'I have finished the work which Thou hast given me to do.'"

"*These words struck us as a presentiment,*" wrote a student at the end of his note-book.

At the same date we read in Vinet's Diary,—

"The weather is dark and rainy; everything is sad around and within me."

On the following day he was less well, but he managed to rise and give his lesson at the school. This last lesson was, in the opinion of those who heard it, the most beautiful of the series. It concluded with the words,—

"When the dove escaped from the ark it found the land submerged; it sought in vain on this immense sea a place to rest its wing, and, trembling with terror, it returned to the ark. O my soul, cast on this impure and dangerous world, thou also, thou knowest not where to place thy foot! Everywhere the mud will soil and the thorns will tear it. Fly away as the dove: return, O my soul, to the ark of thy salvation!"

On the following day, 4th February,<sup>3</sup> Vinet wrote in his Diary,—

"A bad day! Seized with cold, I am obliged to put myself back in bed, where I shall probably stay for a long time."

<sup>1</sup> In *Studies on Blaise Pascal*.

<sup>2</sup> 1847.

<sup>3</sup> 1847.

It is worthy of note that, in spite of the sadness of heart which frequently overcame him, Vinet never gave way to sickly longings for death.

“*April 1846.*”

“Disgust and weariness of the world are nothing,” he writes. “Impatience to leave it is not always good. We must wish to be where God wills, and in fact heaven is where He is. We do not understand eternal life, if we do not understand that it begins here below, and that it dates from the moment in which God has taught us to love Him. . . .

“The desire that St. Paul expresses (Phil. i. 21-24) is to depart in order to be with Christ. By the same principle he might have wished *to live*, to work for Christ; and this desire, when pure, is perhaps above the other. But the wish to live or to die which has not this principle is the effect of a *natural instinct* which must neither be listened to nor obeyed. If the natural desire is not a right, neither is the spiritual desire a duty; but what we must desire is not so much to ‘depart to be with Christ,’ as to be ‘with Christ’ *whether departing or not.*”

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

*The Foundation of the Free Church—"Confession of Faith"—Vinet's Joy in the Work.*

1846-1847.

ALTHOUGH bodily activity was henceforth to be denied him, Vinet, during the two following months, was able to devote himself to the work of building up a new house of God. The Free Church was daily growing stronger. Thirty or forty congregations, led by non-juring pastors, had united to form a single body. A Synod assembled in Lausanne (10th November 1846) had charged a Commission to prepare a scheme of constitution; and although the work was as yet incomplete, the Free Church might be considered to be founded. The *coup d'état* which had struck the Academy furnished the means to provide for one of its most pressing needs, namely, a school of theology.

"There is a point," wrote Vinet, "which has already been practically decided, namely, the entrance of the laity into the Church Council. . . . I desire for the new Church as much liberty as is compatible with unity, and as much unity as is compatible with liberty. The foundation of a Free Church on this little spot of Europe is nothing less than the advent of the Free Church of Luther and of Calvin. It is the first example of a Church '*of multitude*,'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Church of multitude. By this is meant a Church ready to receive fraternally all who wish to profit by the spiritual help it affords, without

which frees itself from the direction of the State. We dare affirm that the establishment of the Free Church is a greater *fact* than the retirement of the pastors was a great *action*."

The Commission set to work as soon as it was named. It met often in Vinet's house, and the official meetings were followed, when he was not too ill, by friendly and animated discussions. According to Vinet, a Free Church cannot be allowed to have any mental reservations on the subject of her belief. "A Church, as well as an individual, ought to find joy in the profession of her faith. '*I believe*' and '*I am*' are, on the part of a Church, two inseparable affirmations; for a Church is nothing else than a communion of believers. Loyalty, Christian fidelity, and the interests of general identification, appear to demand such a confession when a faith surrounded by enemies is concerned. Whatever may be the harmony and the clearness which exist on this point, it is always useful for a Church, as well as for a Christian, to be able to give a reason for its hope."

Then came the question, Ought the Church to return to the Helvetic Confession, or ought it to express its belief under a form more suited to its needs? The Commission decided that every Church worthy of the name ought to make an explicit and formal confession of faith. It did not suffice at this hour to refer to the witness of the men of the sixteenth century, and to say, "That which they have believed, we will continue to believe." It was imperative to put into the mouth of the Church that which it believes, it knows, and it thinks. Vinet began submitting those who knock for admission to "an examination of conscience, often followed," says Vinet, "by unjust refusals, and indiscreet, bold, and vulgar judgments.

"All who name the blessed name of the Saviour are received with love in our ranks. He who sounds the hearts can alone judge between them and the Church if their profession is a deceitful one."

by submitting to his colleagues some articles which established the foundation on which he meant to build. He defines a Free Church as one in which the members "bind themselves together by mutual affection for the common advantage." He sums up the faith of this new Free Church in the following words:—

"She confesses the divinity of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, and proclaims as the one sure means of salvation *for repentant sinners*, faith in Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, Mediator between God and men, and Priest of the New Covenant—delivered for our offences, raised for our justification, operating our sanctification by the Holy Spirit of God, which He sends us from His Father; capable, in short, worthy and resolved to save perfectly all those who come to God by Him."

Another article proclaims the absolute independence of the Church of all other authority than that of Jesus Christ, to whose service she consecrates herself entirely, "as a faithful spouse to her husband." Thirdly, the Free Church recognises for its members and treats as such all those who, duly informed of its faith and rules, declare formally their wish to belong to it. These articles, which ignore all details of organization, were favourably received by the committee, and Vinet was charged with that part of the report which concerned the most delicate point, the question of the *Confession of Faith*. This draft, which was executed with the greatest care, was printed in January 1847. Here, again, we find Vinet taking up a position which is not in contradiction, but in contrast with that which he had formerly adopted. We have seen him in 1838–39 fighting persistently for the maintenance of the Helvetic Confession of Faith in the National Church—not that he considered it perfect, but because it was the only creed possible, and that he had to choose

between that and nothing. In 1847, face to face with a Free Church established on free soil, he still speaks with respect of this ancient and venerable monument of the past, but he pronounces himself strongly in favour of a new creed. He insists that all its articles shall point clearly to the essential point—Christ crucified. He will have nothing that resembles a systematic record of doctrines. He will have a symbol which can be understood by all.

“If it be necessary that the Church should confess its faith, it is certainly essential that the form of this confession should be accessible to the humblest servant, the most ignorant workman, if only they are Christian, and that each article should find an echo in their hearts. Every other system leads us unconsciously, and doubtless against the will of its adherents, to the *faith of authority* and to the *principle of tradition*.”

It was Vinet's ardent wish that the new creed should be “simple enough to flow as a stream of gold from the lips of the child, and from the old man on the bed of death.” But every member of the Synod had not this taste for doctrinal simplicity. Many were astonished that the authors of the new symbol did not express dogmatically the mystery of the Trinity, and that they thought it sufficient to speak of the divine origin of the Sacred Writings, without insisting on their inspiration and their authority. They corrected, consulted, wrote over again, and finally added several dogmas which had been passed over in silence.

Vinet was not able to assist at the deliberations of the Synod, which did not begin till a few days after his last walk. But he followed their progress day by day with an interest which his suffering condition did not diminish. He even intervened in the discussion by means of a newspaper article, written under the form of a letter to



a member of the Synod. Illness prevented him from finishing it; but the first pages of the MS. show that he was equally frank in his praise and blame.

"I own that neither the definite work nor the creed itself reaches the ideal I had conceived of what a Christian Church ought to be. The members of the Synod have only approached with great reserve ecclesiastical truths whose extreme antiquity constitutes their extreme novelty. Thus they have not dared recognise the primitive character of the institution of elders,<sup>1</sup> nor have they denied to pastors the sacerdotal character which the gospel ignores, whilst setting them apart for the assembly of the saints and the edification of the Body of Christ. On more than one point the Synod has preferred the weak to the strong expression—even when truth has been formulated so clearly as to leave no loophole to the cavils of theologians. . . . As if it were less honourable and less sure to *say* things than to think them."

Here the manuscript ends.

Vinet strongly objected to the omission of the word "repentant" in the Confession of Faith, on the plea that "repentance contains the entire work of grace."

"Repentance is a grace. We cannot of ourselves and without God repent, any more than we can believe, obey, and persevere. This being recognised, let us say that repentance, which is a grace, is no less a condition of salvation, and that salvation is only offered in the gospel to the repentant, and that faith only saves in so far as it produces and implies repentance. . . . To bring into relief this great idea, Jesus Christ, who Himself preached repentance with the pardon of sins, was preceded by a prophet, whose special mission it was to preach repentance and prepare the way of the Lord. The human mind and heart resemble vases that shrink and refuse to contain the truth in its entirety. Some of the

<sup>1</sup> Vinet was of opinion that pastors should be consecrated with the aid of the elders. "*It is the Church that consecrates, not the clergy.*"

divine fluid escapes by the edges, without counting, alas! all that escapes by the cracks. . . . *Antinomianism, which was one of the weaknesses of the Revival*, has cast into the second place and driven into the shade the dogma of repentance considered as a condition of salvation. And it was for this very reason necessary in a creed which had nothing speculative, where everything expressed the intimate union of Jesus Christ with the soul of the faithful—it was necessary to recall this solemn truth, and to recognise that it was the *repentant* sinner that Jesus Christ came to save.”

Vinet had complained of the bias of the Revival on more than one occasion, but this time he had summed up his reprobation in one word, and had given a name to the tendency he had so long combated. The blow could not fail to be keenly felt. One of the non-juring pastors, finding himself wounded in his favourite theology, retorted by imputations of Arminianism or of “semi-Pelagianism.” In spite of his suffering condition, Vinet would not charge any one else with the task of sending a reply, and his feeble hand corrected the lines which he dictated on this occasion. Without insisting on the word antinomianism, without trying to furnish the proof of a fact which escaped demonstration on account of its negative character, he did not believe himself justified in withdrawing the accusation he had formulated. According to his judgment, the Revival had laid too little stress on the elements of obligation, on the witness of the Spirit, and on the progress formally consecrated by the gospel. It had given too small a share to the subjective side of the work of salvation.

“In this part of the world,” said Vinet, “we are specially attached to the study of one of the writers of the New Testament. . . . Yet all merit our equal attention, our equal confidence; and I may add, that even in the case of the book we prefer to study, all the others ought to be

noted with equal care. It would ill become the disciples of the gospel to see nothing in that gospel save St. Paul, and to take only from St. Paul that which distinguishes him from his companions, and not that which they all have in common. As a fact, all St. John is to be found in St. Paul; but how many students of the Bible seem never to have made this discovery!"

According to M. Scherer, this article may be considered as the *testament of Vinet*.

Although the Free Church had failed to realize the ideal existing in Vinet's mind, its foundation upon the firm basis of religious liberty may be considered as the crowning joy and crowning triumph of his life.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

(See *Life of Alex. Vinet*: E. Rambert, chap. xxi.)

*Last Days*, 1847.

VINET's activities were not limited to the great and absorbing work of the establishment of the Free Church. During these days of suffering and weariness he did not forget the *Semeur*. The last article which he wrote for this journal was a criticism of the sixth volume of Michelet's *History of France*. History for Vinet was not a simple succession of accidents. He saw God in history,—God working through the everyday events of the political world.

"The wisdom of God," wrote Vinet, "is various. It brings back humanity by turns to good sense by way of morality, and back again to morality and duty by means of mental activity. In the fifteenth century it is to the latter that the sovereign regulator seems to give the preference. By awakening new ideas through the discovery of Greek antiquity, and by giving birth to new interests by means of naval expeditions, he drew the century out of the condition of intellectual torpor into which it had fallen. This new impulse, communicated to minds by means of voyages, of commerce, and of classical literature, will serve later for the reform of worship and the reconstitution of moral doctrines. People have begun to *think*, and morality belongs to Thought, and morality will not delay to render to thought much more than she has ever received."

Another work afforded Vinet occasion for the exercise

of the higher criticism—*The Girondins* of Lamartine. The volumes arrived from Paris. The greatness of the subject and the magic of the style formed a powerful temptation, but already he lacked the force to grapple with the work. Day by day his malady was making new ravages and new progress. If proofs of affection could have sufficed to cure him, Vinet would have been cured a hundred times. Letters, offers of assistance, receipts, cordials, arrived from all quarters, and often from entire strangers. The sympathy of so many kind hearts was very precious to the sufferer.

“Only a word,” he wrote to a friend, “because I cannot write more; or rather a hundred, which accumulate in my heart. One word—*thank you*. . . . I am not able to prove to you how deeply I am touched, consoled, and helped by your kindness. I render thanks to One whose presence I love to recognise in the benefactions of which I am the object. The Eternal is with me among those who come to my aid.”

To another he writes,—

“I should have thought myself wanting in respect and in gratitude in not taking your offer seriously, and I should not have failed to ask for the cordial at the proper moment. . . . And now, as if you would fain hide from me a return of winter, which I feel only too well, you bring me the most beautiful symbols of spring. It would be difficult to tell you all that the sight of these fresh, smiling splendours has made me feel. The sense of unmerited kindness, the magnificence of the flowers, of whose royal purple Solomon might more justly have been jealous than of the lily of Palestine; dare I say also the contrast found in their brilliancy of hue, energy of growth, and suavity of perfume, with my decrepitude,—all this has produced emotions which have ended in tears, and I doubt whether your sherry (which I believe to be delicious) has anything so intoxicating as the sight of these flowers I press against my face. I am deeply touched by your kindness, and I

reply to it, not being able to do more, by my most earnest and affectionate wishes for yourself and for all that is dear to you. May this Sunday be as happy for you as you have known how to make it sweet for me."

Vinet's office as a director of consciences did not cease upon the bed of death. He wrote the notes for such letters in pencil, in a little note-book that he could hold in his hand. His wife copied them, and, if necessary, completed the half-written phrases. One is addressed to a young man who wished to accept the morality of the gospel and to reject the rest. Vinet replies:—

"Can you explain to me why from all time two classes of individuals have never been able to adopt your point of view. I mean the *greatest minds* and the *common people*. Your opinion has been that of minds of a common order, who are capable neither of the simplicity of the people nor of the elevation of genius. You speak of the morality of the gospel as if you knew all about it. . . . But you have not understood it, because it has not produced in you the *need of something more*. Law (or morality) is a school-master to bring us to Christ."

To M. Gabriel Delessert, Vinet expresses his sympathy on the occasion of his father's death:—

"A Benjamin Delessert, as a Wilberforce, belongs to all countries. It is humanity, not only France, which has lost a great man."

The last letter was one of encouragement to M. Gaullieur, author of *The Death of Albert*:—

"The author has understood that it is not the isolated or accidental truth, but the general, the *human* truth, which is the law of every work of art. . . . History has its literary aspect, and this the author has well seized. The moral tone is excellent."

A few days later the doctors suggested that he should

try the effect of a change of air. On the 21st of April he was transported to Clarens, where his friends and colleagues, Messrs. Chappuis and Secrétan, received him in their arms and carried him to his bed. He was lodged in a house where Lord Byron had formerly received hospitality.<sup>1</sup>

The weather was cold and uncertain, and the progress of the malady was such that its fatal issue could no longer appear doubtful. Vinet himself realized that the end was near. A certain effort was necessary in order to renounce joyously the projects he had formed,—the dream of a sojourn of a far different character at Clarens, and all the labours that he hoped to achieve. But when there was no longer any doubt, and he understood that such was indeed the will of God, he submitted without a murmur.

At Clarens, as at Lausanne, he was surrounded by marks of interest and affection. His friends came to visit him from afar. Each day brought some one from Lausanne or Geneva, and he received them all with joy. He retained his presence of mind and perfect lucidity of thought. He enjoyed listening to reading, and took a vivid interest in passing events. Occasionally he dictated his thoughts. One of the last and keenest of his literary pleasures was listening to the reading of Pascal's *Short Life of Jesus*, discovered by M. Faugère. He wished the book to be noticed in the *Semeur*, and only a few days before his death he dictated on the subject a few pages, which terminate with these words (referring to Pascal's testament):—

“Many readers on hearing Pascal implore ‘the intercessions of the glorious Virgin Mary, and of all the saints of Paradise,’ will be scandalized and complain of inconsist-

<sup>1</sup> The third Canto of *Childe Harold* had been written in the room now occupied by Vinet. F. Frossard.

ency. But, between ourselves, is there any one who, in matters of religion, is perfectly consistent? Probably not. As for Pascal, we entertain the firm conviction that while expressing a sincere persuasion on the subject of the Virgin and the saints, his faith and hope were firmly based on the one true foundation. We do not deny the existence of contradiction in the notions and the terms. We content ourselves with the certainty that there was no contradiction in the heart."

On the 30th April arrived a stranger,—an Irvingite minister sent by a friend to ask of God the restoration of the sufferer. Vinet consented to receive him, but with the understanding that he submitted himself unreservedly to the divine will.

Turning to the Diary, we find the following entry in the handwriting of Mme. Vinet:—

"The most solemn day of our life—death apparently near. . . . M. Méjanel (Irvingite) came expressly to pray, and impose hands on the sufferer. He held a short service, first with the assembled household . . . ; then with Alexander, with much unction, tact, and moderation . . . ; then again with Auguste, Charles Secrétan, and Sophie. He went away in tears."

On Sunday, May 1, M. Chappuis came from Lausanne in order to pray with his friend. In the evening, Vinet, left alone with his wife and sister, asked them to read him Ps. xxxii. and li. Afterwards he remarked, "It is all that I can say to you."

The following night was extremely painful. "A terrible night," says the Diary. Towards morning the suffering abated; the last resistance of the body was vanquished. The doctors permitted him to be given anything he fancied. In the course of the day, wishing to gauge his condition, he asked for a book and his glasses. Seeing that he could not read, he said to his wife,—

"I am worse . . . , or rather, better."



"As long as there continues a breath of life I shall continue to hope," she replied. "But I have confided you to the Saviour. May He do with you as He thinks best."

"That is a good word," answered Vinet.

Many of his friends being gathered together in the house, Vinet called three of them,—M. Marquis, M. Chappuis, and Charles Secrétan,—and dictated to the last-named his last wishes. He left to his wife the use of all that they possessed, on condition that it should be disposed of in accordance with the laws of justice and equity. He begged his friends to serve as fathers to his invalid son, mentioning specially M. Marquis and M. Alexis Forel. He added:—

"I place my confidence in Him who does not reject bruised hearts. My tenderest wishes are for those who have sought to help me, and they extend to all their interests and embrace eternity."

He terminated by expressing his deep affection for his family.

When the written words were read over to him, he took a pen and traced with his own hand at the foot of the page, "*These are my wishes and thoughts.*"

Madame Vinet desired to send some message to two friends with whom he had ceased to correspond on account of some diversity of opinion.

"What do you wish me to say?" she asked.

"That I love them," was Vinet's reply.

One of them, on reading these words, exclaimed,—

"I should have liked it better if he had said, 'I pardon him.'"

His son Auguste arrived in the afternoon. The remembrance of all the trouble that he had given his father by his waywardness — which aggravated his natural

infirmities—was extremely painful to him. He flung himself on his knees by the bedside and implored forgiveness. His father blessed him, adding, "I have pardoned everything,—if there has been anything to pardon."

Later, Vinet asked for his sister and for an old family servant.

When all were gathered around his bed he tried to speak.

"Listen to me," he said in a broken voice. . . . "I ask pardon of God and of men for the scandal I have caused by my impatience and my intolerance. Tell my son to remain united to the Saviour he has found, and that, although he loses a father, he still possesses three mothers. Keep together—all united. . . . Sophie, tell them " . . .

He paused suddenly, perceiving that his wife was writing down his words for the benefit of Auguste, whose deafness prevented him from hearing his father's voice.

"It is enough," said Vinet, "I will say no more." From this moment he was silent, either on account of weakness or because he feared that his utterances would be spread abroad.

In the night he became agitated, and one of his friends, after reading the farewell prayer, John xvii., proposed to pray with him. Vinet murmured, "Pray for the most elementary graces." A little before he had said to his friend Leresche, "Pray for me as for the most unworthy of men." Another time he said, "Ask God that I may live in order to be converted." Vinet did not regard conversion as an act which could be performed once for all. It needed to be continued by sanctification; so that the completion of conversion could be nothing short of holiness of life.

He accepted with gratitude and tenderness all the care which his nurses bestowed on him during the night.

Towards the morning he felt his strength diminishing. "I can no longer think," he said to his wife. Many times he murmured, "O God, have pity on me!" His wife asked him if he could hear her voice. He made a sign in the affirmative. She embraced him, saying, "I give you into the arms of Jesus Christ." He made a feeble movement of assent, and, a few moments later, his great spirit passed away—

5 A.M., May 4, 1847.

His remains were laid to rest in the little cemetery of Clarens, within view of the Alps, and of the blue waters of Leman he loved so well.

On the monument placed over his grave his friends engraved the words:—

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever," Dan. xii. 3.

His widow, knowing the pain such homage would have caused to his humble spirit, begged that the following verse might be added:—

"My life is hid with Christ in God."

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## CONCLUSION.

It is hoped that the foregoing pages will have enabled readers to grasp, not only the charm of Vinet's personality, but the importance of the conception of Christianity which he presented to the world.

It was his mission to give a new impulse to the religious movement of his time by insisting on the profoundly human character of Christianity, and on its marvellous adaptation to the most elevated needs of our nature.<sup>1</sup> He believed that the cause of religion could not be better served than by "causing sermons to abound with the morality which abounds in the gospel itself."<sup>2</sup> He wished to *humanize* the Revival, to reconcile it with science, with reason, and with art, and to put an end to the dry scholastic theology of the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup> The keynote of Vinet's teaching is to be found in the words: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

In spite of the self-distrust and exaggerated modesty which characterize Vinet, it is easy to see that he was conscious of the greatness of the work he had been called to perform.<sup>4</sup> He did not hesitate to declare that the Christian Church was on the eve of both a religious and a theological revolution, more profound and more extensive than that of the sixteenth century. "The

<sup>1</sup> See p. 301.<sup>2</sup> See p. 177.<sup>3</sup> See pp. 8, 177.<sup>4</sup> See p. 250.

Reformation as a principle is as permanent in the Church as Christianity," wrote Vinet. "It is nothing less than Christianity restoring itself spontaneously and by its proper strength. The Reformation is something which has yet to be accomplished, *something which has to be done over and over again*, and for which Luther and Calvin have only prepared a wider field of action. They have not *once for all* reformed the Church, but they have strengthened the great principle and posed the condition of all future reform."<sup>1</sup>

Let us weigh well the meaning of these words. Reformation, according to Vinet, is a living principle, the principle of healthy growth. Every scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven must bring out of his treasure-house things that are new as well as things that are old. And, if Pentecost has any meaning, we are bound to believe that the Spirit of God is able to guide even this restless nineteenth century into "all truth." Vinet was pre-eminently a seeker after truth, and he followed the heavenly guide whithersoever she led him. Had his life been prolonged, we should doubtless have seen proceed from his pen fresh vindications of the rights of the individual conscience to "manifest its convictions" by the adoption of a new and living conception of Christianity.

We have already seen by one of Vinet's later utterances that he had ceased to hold the popular doctrine of substitution—that crude debtor and creditor view of the transcendent manifestation of God's love to the world.<sup>2</sup> He has never clearly explained his views on the subject of the Bible, but he furnishes us with many indications that it is no longer in his eyes a code of doctrines imposing itself with the authority of a creed. He even "thanks God that one is not compelled to understand it, so that a place is left to our activity in the acquisition of

<sup>1</sup> P. 191.

<sup>2</sup> See letter to Erskine, p. 248.

truth." The Revival had taken its departure from the external authority of Scripture. Vinet, on the contrary, declares that it is not to the Scriptures, but to Jesus Christ, that one must go. "I do not believe in Christ because I have believed in the Scriptures; but I believe in the Scriptures because there I have found Christ."<sup>1</sup> And again, "We must not go from the Scriptures to Christ, but from Christ to the Scriptures."

Humanity cannot be delivered from the burden of its sins by belief in a book, or in a code of doctrines which are only human, and changeful conceptions of eternal truth; but by union with Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; Who reveals Himself to the conscience, and Who holds before our ravished eyes the vision of moral beauty.

Vinet's conception of Christianity embraced two facts—the human conscience and the person of Christ. The person of Christ was the centre of the gospel,—regarding Him neither as the expiatory victim of orthodoxy, nor as the human ideal of modern thought, but as God manifest under the veil of the incarnation. This is why Vinet represents faith as a look turned upon One who had said: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." This faith is not intellectual belief: it is a moral fact.

Although Vinet attributed the new life to the grace of God, he did not hesitate to place side by side with it man's personal activity, being persuaded that human liberty has its part in the appropriation of the salvation procured through Jesus Christ, and he attached supreme importance to the witness of conscience and of experience. The important point was to put truth, concentrated in the person of Christ, in immediate relation with the soul of man.

The opposition of faith and reason was without mean-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 252.

ing in his eyes, because he saw in reason one of those universal and immutable premisses to which all systems appeal, and which furnishes the criterion of truth. Christ must be embraced by the *entire being*, for He satisfies every human need: love, reason, conscience, and the thirst for ideal truth.

The struggle that existed in Vinet's mind between the duty of proclaiming his convictions and the fear of placing a stumbling-block in the path of the weak, continued to the end.<sup>1</sup>

One who knew him<sup>2</sup> intimately writes: "If he kept silence, it was from a sense of duty; but he did not do so without suffering. *This silence was one of the sorrows of his life.*"

In addition to the timidity engendered by a peculiarly sensitive disposition, and accentuated by physical suffering, Vinet imagined that he was not well armed for the conflict, on account of the incompleteness of his theological studies. It is certain that he was neither a savant nor a great scholar, but it is not improbable that he was all the better fitted for the task he was called to perform. In the words of E. Scherer, "Vinet was more than a scholar, he was a thinker; he was more than a professed theologian, he was a religious writer full of vivacity and of originality. *He lived the life of his century more thoroughly than a mere specialist could have done, and from the heights of his intellectual position he spoke the language of the gospel to the world, and of the world to the Church.*"

By proclaiming the supremacy of conscience, Vinet brought back religion to its essence—that is to say, to

<sup>1</sup> "Those who fear to put a stumbling-block in the path of the weak, do not hesitate to leave one in the way of the strong."—*Unpublished MS. Henri Charannes.*

<sup>2</sup> F. Frossard.

communion with God. His principle is the Protestant principle, and his writings mark an important revolution in Christian belief. He brought about a reformation in the bosom of the Reformed Church by stripping it of numberless elements to which it clung, although unable to assimilate them. "He has laboured at the great work which one century bequeaths to another, and which will not be accomplished till conscience and the gospel have been recognised as two planes which ought to coincide exactly."<sup>1</sup>

It is doubtless true that Vinet did not see the logical result of much of his own teaching; but it is no less true that the foremost champions of the new theology have closely followed the lines traced by Vinet's hand.

More than forty years have passed away since the great Vaudois thinker was called from the scene of his earthly labours. Although his faith was positive and ardent, the conception of Christianity which he had formed was too spiritual to find favour in the eyes of the majority of Christians who, like the Jews of old, "seek after a sign," to wit, the manifestation of a visible authority. Those who have grasped the full meaning of Vinet's sermons on the "Work of God" and the "Look of Faith," may well inquire whether the term *faith* is not a misnomer when applied to an intellectual conception of Christianity which is based on the letter rather than on the spirit, on a theory rather than on life, on a human conception of divine truth, a code of doctrines, rather than on Christ Himself.

Hundreds of men and women, brought up in the belief that God has revealed Himself to mankind by means of an infallible book, dismayed by the inaccuracies, the contradictions of a collection of writings which, although of priceless and inestimable value, are not exempt from human error, and bear the distinct trace

<sup>1</sup> E. Scherer.



of human authorship, reject in a tumult of despair the living God and the revelation of His love given us in the person of Jesus Christ.

To such men and women the teaching of Vinet will best appeal. Stripping Christianity of the accessories which have gathered around it during the progress of centuries, casting aside the principle of authority, whether existing in an infallible Church, an infallible book, or an infallible code of doctrines, he brings the soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness face to face with the living Christ; he bids us contemplate Him during the long passion which began at Bethlehem and ended upon Mount Calvary; he bids us listen to His voice speaking directly to our hearts, by means of conscience, of duty, of the moral sense, and of all the sweet charities of life.

Once brought in contact with that divine personality, once resting on the bosom of Christ, tempests may rage, systems "may have their day, and cease to be," dogmas, which are but human conceptions of the eternal truth, may rise and fall—the soul sits secure, united by the bonds of personal trust and love to its living Lord.

"It seems strange," wrote Erskine a few days after Vinet's death, "that he is no longer in the world whom I have regarded ever since I knew him as an instrument that God had fashioned and fitted for a great and much-needed work. It seems strange, for he has left his work but half finished, according to our apprehensions; but God knows His own way. The work is His, and He knows best how it is to be accomplished."

Strange to say, Vinet's *half-finished work* remains almost at a standstill in his own country. May we not hope that on the richer soil of Great Britain the seed sown by this great teacher may bring forth a gracious harvest, which all earnest seekers after truth will gather in with delight?

"Truth," says Vinet, "is stronger than its adversaries, for it vanquishes them; and stronger than its defenders, because it can do without them. The world, while trembling, ranges itself sooner or later on the side of truth. The memory of the witnesses of truth comes sooner or later to be honoured, the fools of the past are the sages of the future, and, if their names perish, their witness endures. . . .

"Our force as well as our duty lies in hope. God grant that we may believe everything possible, even that in our old world the glory and force of the ancient days may revive."



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